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As I tell you this, I'm thinking of the occasion when I learned this, just a few years ago. It was quite significant for me. <sup>It</sup> <sup>ed</sup> opening up some forgotten memories. I don't think I've ever told this story before.

Over the years, people have occasionally asked me when my rather intense concern about nuclear warfare started. (Somebody asked me that here, just yesterday.) I tell them it started on August 6, 1945.

I remember the moment, the way people my age remember what they were doing when they heard about Pearl Harbor, or when Kennedy was shot. I was standing on a street corner in Detroit. I was fourteen. It was a hot, sunny day -- I think it was afternoon -- and I was looking at the front page of the Detroit News in a metal vending machine on the corner. A streetcar was passing by as I read the headline about the destruction of Hiroshima by an atomic bomb. That was the moment that I could recall feeling, for the first time, very uneasy about the human future. *And I remember thinking: "We should not have done this. This was wrong."*

I shared those recollections with a reporter, Peter Schrag, who was covering the Pentagon Papers trial. I got the impression that it cost me a lot of my credibility with him. He said very firmly: "That's ridiculous. I'm the same age as you. I was fourteen then, too, and I was glad we dropped the bomb. I was glad to see the Japs get it. I was glad for the war to be ended. And every kid I knew felt the same. I can't believe you were any different."

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disturbed. He clearly thought I was posing or fantasizing. (That was a damaging reaction for a reporter to have about me, while I was on trial.) He was so sure about it that he made me wonder, could I be wrong about this? I was puzzled, because the memory seemed so clear.

Then, years later, my father happened to mention that I had indeed been "very, very upset" at the time of the bombing -- and, he also recalled, about Truman's exuberance in announcing it. He told me that I had later brought him a copy of the New Yorker with John Hersey's account of Hiroshima. He said I was crying, and that I said, "Dad, you've got to read this. It's the worst thing I've ever read." And he did read it.

So, my memory wasn't wrong, which was reassuring. Still, Schrag's challenge worked at me. The feelings he remembered were natural enough, and I knew most people had shared them. Why had I reacted differently? That I couldn't answer. Until I remembered, in November 1978.

I can pinpoint the date, because I was flying to Denver to stand trial for blocking the railroad tracks ~~at~~<sup>founder's</sup> at the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Production Facility. On the plane I was reading a book, Lawrence and Oppenheimer by Nuel Pharr Davis, in which I came across the statement that "the German nuclear threat had been dissipated" for Oppenheimer by "intelligence reports toward the end of 1944." ¶ This was the answer to a question I'd carried in the back of my mind for a long time. I found that it was an answer I had not wanted to find. I read the sentence over, and the text around it, a couple of

times. A very heavy feeling came over me. I found it hard to breathe. It was a very unusual feeling. Painful.

I had always admired Oppenheimer for his stand opposing the hydrogen bomb. I had read the full transcript of the Oppenheimer Hearings -- when his security clearance was removed, <sup>essentially</sup> because of that opposition -- and after the Pentagon Papers trial I even identified with him a little bit. I guess I had wanted to believe that the work that made him "father of the A-bomb" had been done for a good reason. There was only one good reason: to prevent the Nazis from having a monopoly of the atomic bomb, to deter them, to keep them or anyone from ever using it. And what I had just read was that Robert Oppenheimer had known -- six months before the end of the war in Europe, nine months before his bomb was dropped on Japanese civilians -- that deterring the Germans was a non-problem. He had known from that moment on that deterring anybody from using the bomb was not what he and his colleagues were up to.

I looked out the window of the plane at a red sun that seemed to be taking a long time setting. I was thinking about Oppenheimer, feeling <sup>unaccountably</sup> very bad; and then a set of memories suddenly came back to me, from my sophomore year in high school.

In 1943 I was in a school called Cranbrook, a private school near Detroit where I was a scholarship student. I had a rather progressive social science teacher in the 10th grade who introduced us to two unusual subjects. One was the war-time relocation of the Japanese, in California, to what were



really concentration camps. He brought in a Nisei to our class who had been in the camps and who was then working on our kitchen at the school, to tell us about the <sup>experience</sup> camps. We spent a week studying that, <sup>being</sup> <sup>ed</sup> introducing us to the idea that our own government had done something that was unconstitutional, illegal, wrong. It was an unusual thing to hear at age twelve, and for an American to hear at all (in those days).

The same course introduced a concept to us that was popular then, called "cultural lag." It was a sociological notion, that technology had progressed faster than our ethical and political abilities to control it. It was <sup>supposedly</sup> a dangerous kind of "gap." For a case study, the teacher told us about something he had seen described in a couple of articles, something that might come along eventually: a "U-235 fission bomb."

In histories of the Manhattan Project you'll find that in 1943 and 1944 three or four magazine articles were written about a hypothetical bomb based on uranium fission that would be a thousand times the power of high explosives. Each of them got the Project security officers terribly concerned about a major security breach. It always turned out there had been no leak; some reporter had been pursuing an old file from 1938-1939, before voluntary and then official secrecy set in. With a lag of a couple of years these things found their way into print.

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put to the class was this: "What will this mean for humanity, if a uranium bomb comes into human hands?" The assumption was that it would be German hands because it was assumed they were ahead. We heard about the experiments they had done. So the prospect seemed especially bad. But the assignment was more general: supposing anybody gets it, what will that lead to?

We thought about it for about a week, and as I recall we all came to the same conclusion. I remember writing a short paper on it, saying, <sup>in effect,</sup> that this would be ~~very~~ bad news for humanity. The phenomenon of cultural lag would be very noticeable. Humanity was not ready to handle that much concentrated destructive power. Even if America got such a bomb soon after the Germans, even we were not morally equipped to handle this. It would be very bad for the world.

That was in 1943.

I don't recall thinking about it for the next two years. I forgot about it. I hoped, I suppose, that it would take a long time coming; maybe the world would be a very different place -- Hitler would be gone, anyway -- before humans had to face this test.


All of this had slipped out of my memory for the last dozen years or so, and as it suddenly returned <sup>on the plane</sup> I recalled, at the same time, the missing parts of <sup>my thoughts</sup> the scene on the Detroit street corner in August, 1945, the <sup>thoughts</sup> parts that <sup>led to</sup> went with the <sup>reaction</sup> ~~memory~~ that ~~had made~~ Peter Schrag <sup>had found so implausible.</sup> ~~so incredulous.~~ As clearly as I could hear again the streetcar clattering by, I could see the headlines once more, and the story I started to read after



buying the paper; about the secret project, the mysterious bomb, the pow<sup>e</sup>rful forces that had been harnessed by scientists and loosed on the people of a Japanese city. <sup>Only</sup> Now I recalled what I had <sup>first</sup> thought and felt at that moment: <sup>P</sup> "I know exactly what that bomb is. It's the uranium bomb we talked about, and I wrote about, two years ago."

<sup>g</sup> "It was my country that got it, after all. First.

<sup>g</sup> "And we used it."



As I relived these thoughts, thirty-three years later, I understood something about myself and my life. This was not a memory returning; I don't think I had ever recognized it before. I suddenly realized that on that afternoon in 1945 I had learned something new about my country,<sup>and</sup> In almost the same moment I had recognized that what I had learned had to be kept to myself. It was a piece of knowledge, a secret, that was going to separate me from others. I had learned that our government was capable of doing -- ~~in fact~~, had just done -- something gravely mistaken, very dangerous for the world, morally wrong.

As these memories and thoughts converged on my plane-ride to Denver, I could begin to understand the flood of feeling that had welled up as I read the passage on Robert Oppenheimer. It was a very old sorrow, a sense of isolation and loss and fear, that went with a bitter judgment on a country I loved. It was a burden of ambivalence and a need for vigilance that would have been less hard to live with, the next thirty years, if I had been less identified with that country, less patriotic. It was like the weight of growing up with the knowledge -- that could not be told, and must not be forgotten -- that one of your parents had committed a terrible crime.

This didn't mean that I believed the government was evil, or that I became less patriotic than I had been during the previous four years of watching wartime newsreels. I went on to join the Marines, after all, and then the Defense Department. Even before that, I came to admire Harry Truman greatly; in



the Fifties and early Sixties I thought of myself as a Truman Democrat. In 1965 I volunteered to go to Vietnam, as a State Department official.

All this time, I spoke to no one about my early and continuing feelings about city-bombing and nuclear warfare. Working for the government on just these matters -- in hopes of preventing either from happening ever again -- became my lifework. Over these years, my <sup>earlier</sup> perception about government<sup>s</sup> was not often in my conscious awareness. But it was there, waiting to warn me, as I could now see in my responses to painful discoveries at certain later times, and in my very readiness to make those discoveries. Reading the nuclear war plans at the end of the Fifties was one of those times. Reading the ~~P~~entagon ~~P~~apers, on coming home from Vietnam a decade later, was another. <sup>#</sup> What I had perceived in August of 1945 was that our leaders, the President and his immediate subordinates, my later bosses -- though they might earn our respect and trust and loyalty in general -- were capable of massive, and even criminal errors. You had to be alert to that. You had to keep your eyes open. If you didn't want to be party to everything they might do, the time might come when you had to wake somebody up.

In 1945 I didn't expect others to arrive at that perception. They hadn't spent a week, as I had done, two years earlier, thinking about the dangers to humanity in the long run, the moral and physical risks, if anyone -- even Americans -- got hold of a uranium fission bomb. On August 6, they

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nuclear actions in that light -- which would follow for many of them if the facts could be gotten through to them -- many will act determinedly to prevent its being done again.

Q: Is that <sup>perhaps, naive?</sup> realistic? As you say, people are pretty effective at resisting finding out that they've been mistaken, that their leaders have fooled them and led them into crime. Can you really get facts through to them that they don't want to hear? And even if you did, what basis is there for your hope they'll act on it and change their lives?

DE: I've acted on such a hope in the past, and the results seemed to me to justify it. The facts in the Pentagon Papers were about as painful as one could imagine. Yet many people in Congress and the public thanked me for releasing them, because it helped them understand what they needed to do.

My hope that would happen was based, in part, on the impact on my own thinking and action of discovering facts like these. What I learned from the history in the Pentagon Papers -- which I was the second American to read in full -- was that every one of the rationales that had been presented to legitimate our actions in Vietnam was invalid, or blatantly insufficient. In 7,000 pages of top secret documentation and analysis I could find no remotely adequate justification for our killing Vietnamese; ever, or, above all, for our continuing to do it. That conclusion put me under a certain responsibility. Even



for a non-pacifist like myself, to kill people without unarguably strong justification is not just an error, it's murder. (I never accepted the diplomat's credo that an error is "worse than a crime"). That meant that I should try to help stop our killing immediately, rather than passively let it go on while we waited to see a graceful way out.

Powerful action opposing a wartime President involves risk. Well, lots of Americans take risks for what they think is right. For example, three million Americans risked their lives in Vietnam; I was one of those. Another example was set by tens of thousands of young Americans who risked prison -- and thousands who went to prison -- to bear witness to the very beliefs about the war that I now shared. Meeting one of them face to face -- Randall Kehler, now the coordinator of the national Freeze Campaign -- had a particular impact on me. <sup>It</sup> ~~They~~ woke me up to the awareness that civilians can have an obligation to take risks and make sacrifices for peace, just as soldiers do in war. I'm grateful for the lesson. That's why I do civil disobedience now, to pass it on.

But what was the best thing for me to do? The answer came in my own response to another crime and cover-up, in this case revealed by investigative journalism. On September 30, 1969, I read a lead story in the L.A. Times (it later won an award) about the decision to drop courtmartial proceedings against some Special Forces officers in Vietnam for the killing of a Vietnamese, an alleged double agent. To paraphrase the journalist's account, as I ~~understood~~ <sup>interpreted</sup> it: Secretary of

the Army Resor insisted that he had ordered the proceedings dropped on his own responsibility; but that obviously wasn't the case (i.e., he was lying). The decision had clearly come from the White House; though the White House denied this. The alleged reason for dropping it was that the CIA refused to give testimony; but that was obviously untrue. General Abrams claimed to have started the proceedings because a murder had been committed; but that was obviously false, since such murders were commonplace in Vietnam, especially in intelligence operations. His real reason was evidently that he had been lied to by the Special Forces <sup>commander;</sup> officers; who in turn had <sup>been</sup> lied to <sup>by his subordinates, down to</sup> ~~their commander, as had~~ the warrant officer and sergeant who seemed to have done the killing. The journalist was not quite so blunt in his language, but that is how I read it. I got up from bed, where I had been reading the paper early in the morning, with this thought in my head:

"This is the system that I have been part of for 15 years. It's a system in which at every level from top to bottom -- from the Commander-in-Chief down to the warrant-officer -- people lie, automatically, to conceal murder."

I decided I was not going to lie any more.

I had in my personal top secret safe in my office at RAND, for my own authorized research, a 43-volume top secret study, "History of U.S. Decision-Making in Vietnam, 1945-68." That was 7,000 pages of documentation of lies and crimes that had been committed over a period of twenty-three years in

Vietnam and Washington. <sup>With the help of my friend, Tony Russo, who had access to a Xerox, a</sup> I started copying them that night. I <sup>machine,</sup>



*"The truth shall make you free." I grew up hearing that from my father; it was his favorite line from the bible. It was my hope that truths that had changed me would help free Americans, and other victims from our longest war.*

decided to share this history with the American people -- starting with Congress, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. I hoped that when they learned these facts, many would feel compelled, as I did, to act on them. After all, it was precisely from officials' fear of that reaction that these historical facts had been kept top secret so long. ←

I had little interest -- then, or in doing similar work now -- merely in setting the historical record straight. I wouldn't say that I have no interest in that, but it wasn't for that that I was doing something I felt sure would send me to prison for the rest of my life. ¶ My potential sentence in the Pentagon Papers trial was 115 years, so my earlier sense of the stakes for me wasn't far off. § What I didn't know then was that I was breaking no law in what I was doing. But that turns out not to be a thoroughly reliable barrier against prosecution, and even conviction. (As my lawyer, Leonard Boudin, put it, after reporting that a year's legal research had revealed that Congress -- in view of the First Amendment -- had passed no law making illegal anything that I had done: "Let's face it, Dan. Copying 7,000 pages of Top Secret documents and giving them to the New York Times has a bad ring to it.")

From associates in the White House, I knew by September, 1969 that the Nixon Administration was planning to continue and almost surely to escalate the war in Vietnam, contrary to the impression they successfully conveyed to the public. That would replay the history of 1964, of which I had been a parti-

cipant in the Pentagon. I hoped the public would forestall that, if they became aware of it. The Pentagon Papers demonstrated the pattern of deliberate deception in earlier periods, even though the study did not go beyond 1968. ~~The public, if they could read these documents, was capable of seeing the possible analogies to the present and suspecting the worst, which happened to be the reality. That was why release of this largely-Democratic history caused such panic in a Republican Administration. And it was why releasing the history turned out to be a useful act.~~

*(the hidden history of)*  
~~It is why I hope, now, that a discussion of our national past as bombers and USAF doctrine and practice of strategic bombing, nuclear plans, the Bomb will turn out to be useful.~~

Q: ~~When exposing hidden facts or history is likely to promote a sense of guilt ... is that really helpful? Is that really an effective motivation? The same question applies to indicting people.~~

DE: What we want is change -- not paralyzing guilt, or punishment or revenge. You're right that guilt isn't a reliable motivation -- to say the least -- for the kind of change we want. <sup>Yet</sup> ~~But~~ one way of describing the change we're talking about here is that we want our country, and other countries, to stop committing certain massive crimes, and to stop planning and preparing to commit them. And to stop pretending that these intentions and preparations aren't evil, stop legitimating them.

I think the notion of crime, of evil or wrong, is useful as a motivation, maybe even essential. <sup>(Perhaps I differ from Ram Dass on this point).</sup> These notions can be



our scientists to deter German use of the Bomb. We knew that Germany was exploring this; their work with heavy water had already started.

Let me ask this question: How many people think there is better than a 50% chance that if the war had gone on another six months to a year, Germany would have had a Bomb? Two years? How many do not? Just a few, I see. I have found with a very young audience something very interesting. I have found that most young audiences have an answer. They almost all think that Germany was just on the verge of having a Bomb. That's how they have grown up understanding it. They all know about heavy water.

Q: What about the letter that Einstein wrote?

DE: The fission of uranium was first discovered in Germany in 1938 by Hahn. Most of the world's nuclear scientists at that time were in Germany. The evidence then suggested that the Germans would be ahead in developing nuclear capability, although this likelihood declined markedly when a lot of their Jewish nuclear scientists were expelled and came over to the States. So Germany was behind but still retained plenty of very good scientists, like Heisenberg and others. They had the theoretical capability to do it.

There's a quite scholarly book by David Irving on the German nuclear energy program called The Alsos Program, a code name for a British and American project to discover how far along the Germans were in their work. It turned out that the Germans didn't have a bomb project, like our Manhattan Project. They

were parallel to us during the period of the Einstein letter (from 1939-1942), doing theoretical work to see whether a Bomb was feasible. In June '42 we started our Manhattan Project to design a Bomb, with meetings first at Princeton and then later at Los Alamos and Chicago. Problems included devising ways to obtain plutonium and uranium, finding out how to explode a Bomb, and the actual engineering and production of the Bomb.

The Germans decided not to proceed with a Bomb program. They decided they couldn't have it in time. They still held some hope of winning, though not much at that point. Since they thought the war would be over before they could use the Bomb, they put their resources into other things, some of which paid off and some which didn't. Jet fighters paid off quite well for them; V-1 and V-2 missiles in fact didn't. Their nuclear program was not a bomb program; it was just a fission program directed mainly to the use of nuclear fission for energy. They never succeeded. They really didn't have the capability. Under the bombing, their labs were too disrupted for such a major effort.

This is not too hard to discover if you read accounts of that period. But I always had a question in my mind: when did we learn that? My basic assumption was that we didn't know it until after the war when we actually penetrated Germany and interviewed their scientists. In fact, that's not the case. British intelligence had concluded by June '44 that Germany had no Bomb program, but we didn't accept their findings at first. Oppenheimer finally reached the same conclusion in late '44.

He did not pass that knowledge on to more than a handful of



people at the very head of the project. Most scientists were not told. Most of them believed until V-E day that they were racing the Germans. Many of them were struck by the fact that they didn't take a day off for V-E day. A number of them thought that the war was over; a lot of them, remember, were Germans or Eastern European Jews who were very focused on the German threat.

It's a reasonable rationale, hard to fault today. However, Oppenheimer didn't have that reason in late '44. He not only didn't stop the project on V-E Day; he didn't even slow it down. They just took an hour off for an announcement and then went back to work. He had known for some time now that this Bomb was to be used against people who as far as we know didn't have a program. (It turns out they did have a little program, but we knew nothing about it.) We were planning to use the Bomb against people who certainly did not have a Bomb themselves -- the Japanese.

I had been telling people for some years, when this subject came up, that my concern about nuclear energy had started on August 6, 1945. Somebody asked me about this just the other day. I remembered standing on a street corner in Detroit when I was 14. I remember the circumstances; it was a hot day, and I was looking at the headline of the Detroit News about the Bomb. A streetcar was going by. I was very upset by this bomb, by this news. I told that to a reporter named Peter Shrag during my trial and sort of lost credibility with this guy. He said, "That's impossible. I'm the same age as you. I was 14 and I was glad we dropped the Bomb. I was glad to see the Japs get it. I was glad for the war to be over, everybody I knew felt the same,

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<sup>q</sup> "And we used it."<sup>q</sup>



As I relived these thoughts, thirty-three years later, I understood something about myself and my life. This was not a memory returning; I don't think I had ever recognized it before. I suddenly realized that on that afternoon in 1945 I had learned something new about my country,<sup>and</sup> In almost the same moment I had recognized that what I had learned had to be kept to myself. It was a piece of knowledge, a secret, that was going to separate me from others. I had learned that our government was capable of doing -- ~~in fact~~, had just done -- something gravely mistaken, very dangerous for the world, morally wrong.

As these memories and thoughts converged on my plane-ride to Denver, I could begin to understand the flood of feeling that had welled up as I read the passage on Robert Oppenheimer. It was a very old sorrow, a sense of isolation and loss and fear, that went with a bitter judgment on a country I loved. It was a burden of ambivalence and a need for vigilance that would have been less hard to live with, the next thirty years, if I had been less identified with that country, less patriotic. It was like the weight of growing up with the knowledge -- that could not be told, and must not be forgotten -- that one of your parents had committed a terrible crime.

This didn't mean that I believed the government was evil, or that I became less patriotic than I had been during the previous four years of watching wartime newsreels. I went on to join the Marines, after all, and then the Defense Department. Even before that, I came to admire Harry Truman greatly; in



the Fifties and early Sixties I thought of myself as a Truman Democrat. In 1965 I volunteered to go to Vietnam, as a State Department official.

All this time, I spoke to no one about my early and continuing feelings about city-bombing and nuclear warfare. Working for the government on just these matters -- in hopes of preventing either from happening ever again -- became my lifework. Over these years, my <sup>earlier</sup> perception about governments was not often in my conscious awareness. But it was there, waiting to warn me, as I could now see in my responses to painful discoveries at certain later times, and in my very readiness to make those discoveries. Reading the nuclear war plans at the end of the Fifties was one of those times. Reading the Pentagon Papers, on coming home from Vietnam a decade later, was another. <sup>¶</sup> What I had perceived in August of 1945 was that our leaders, the President and his immediate subordinates, my later bosses -- though they might earn our respect and trust and loyalty in general -- were capable of massive, and even criminal errors. You had to be alert to that. You had to keep your eyes open. If you didn't want to be party to everything they might do, the time might come when you had to wake somebody up.

In 1945 I didn't expect others to arrive at that perception. They hadn't spent a week, as I had done, two years earlier, thinking about the dangers to humanity in the long run, the moral and physical risks, if anyone -- even Americans -- got hold of a uranium fission bomb. On August 6, they

nuclear actions in that light -- which would follow for many of them if the facts could be gotten through to them -- many will act determinedly to prevent its being done again.

Q: Is that <sup>perhaps naive?</sup> realistic? As you say, people are pretty effective at resisting finding out that they've been mistaken, that their leaders have fooled them and led them into crime. Can you really get facts through to them that they don't want to hear? And even if you did, what basis is there for your hope they'll act on it and change their lives?

DE: I've acted on such a hope in the past, and the results seemed to me to justify it. The facts in the Pentagon Papers were about as painful as one could imagine. Yet many people in Congress and the public thanked me for releasing them, because it helped them understand what they needed to do.

My hope that would happen was based, in part, on the impact on my own thinking and action of discovering facts like these. What I learned from the history in the Pentagon Papers -- which I was the second American to read in full -- was that every one of the rationales that had been presented to legitimate our actions in Vietnam was invalid, or blatantly insufficient. In 7,000 pages of top secret documentation and analysis I could find no remotely adequate justification for our killing Vietnamese; ever, or, above all, for our continuing to do it. That conclusion put me under a certain responsibility. Even



for a non-pacifist like myself, to kill people without unarguably strong justification is not just an error, it's murder. (I never accepted the diplomat's credo that an error is "worse than a crime"). That meant that I should try to help stop our killing immediately, rather than passively let it go on while we waited to see a graceful way out.

Powerful action opposing a wartime President involves risk. Well, lots of Americans take risks for what they think is right. For example, three million Americans risked their lives in Vietnam; I was one of those. Another example was set by tens of thousands of young Americans who risked prison -- and thousands who went to prison -- to bear witness to the very beliefs about the war that I now shared. Meeting one of them face to face -- Randall Kehler, now the coordinator of the national Freeze Campaign -- had a particular impact on me. <sup>It</sup>~~They~~ woke me up to the awareness that civilians can have an obligation to take risks and make sacrifices for peace, just as soldiers do in war. I'm grateful for the lesson. That's why I do civil disobedience now, to pass it on.

But what was the best thing for me to do? The answer came in my own response to another crime and cover-up, in this case revealed by investigative journalism. On September 30, 1969, I read a lead story in the L.A. Times (it later won an award) about the decision to drop courtmartial proceedings against some Special Forces officers in Vietnam for the killing of a Vietnamese, an alleged double agent. To paraphrase the journalist's account, as I ~~understood~~<sup>interpreted</sup> it: Secretary of

the Army Resor insisted that he had ordered the proceedings dropped on his own responsibility; but that obviously wasn't the case (i.e., he was lying). The decision had clearly come from the White House; though the White House denied this. The alleged reason for dropping it was that the CIA refused to give testimony; but that was obviously untrue. General Abrams claimed to have started the proceedings because a murder had been committed; but that was obviously false, since such murders were commonplace in Vietnam, especially in intelligence operations. His real reason was evidently that he had been lied to by the Special Forces <sup>Commander;</sup> officers; who in turn had <sup>been</sup> lied to <sup>by his subordinates, down to</sup> ~~their commander, as~~ had the warrant officer and sergeant who seemed to have done the killing. The journalist was not quite so blunt in his language, but that is how I read it. I got up from bed, where I had been reading the paper early in the morning, with this thought in my head:

"This is the system that I have been part of for 15 years. It's a system in which at every level from top to bottom -- from the Commander-in-Chief down to the warrant-officer -- people lie, automatically, to conceal murder."

I decided I was not going to lie any more.

I had in my personal top secret safe in my office at RAND, for my own authorized research, a 43-volume top secret study, "History of U.S. Decision-Making in Vietnam, 1945-68." That was 7,000 pages of documentation of lies and crimes that had been committed over a period of twenty-three years in

Vietnam and Washington. <sup>With the help of my friend, Tony Russo, who had access to a xerox</sup> I started copying them that night. I <sup>machine</sup>



*"The truth shall make you free." I grew up hearing that from my father; it was his favorite line from the bible. It was my hope that truths that had changed me would help free Americans, and other nations from our longest war.*

decided to share this history with the American people -- starting with Congress, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. I hoped that when they learned these facts, many would feel compelled, as I did, to act on them. After all, it was precisely from officials' fear of that reaction that these historical facts had been kept top secret so long. ←

I had little interest -- then, or in doing similar work now -- merely in setting the historical record straight. I wouldn't say that I have no interest in that, but it wasn't for that that I was doing something I felt sure would send me to prison for the rest of my life. <sup>¶</sup>My potential sentence in the Pentagon Papers trial was 115 years, so my earlier sense of the stakes for me wasn't far off. <sup>§</sup>What I didn't know then was that I was breaking no law in what I was doing. But that turns out not to be a thoroughly reliable barrier against prosecution, and even conviction. (As my lawyer, Leonard Boudin, put it, after reporting that a year's legal research had revealed that Congress -- in view of the First Amendment -- had passed no law making illegal anything that I had done: "Let's face it, Dan. Copying 7,000 pages of Top Secret documents and giving them to the New York Times <sup>has</sup> a bad ring to it.")

From associates in the White House, I knew by September, 1969 that the Nixon Administration was planning to continue and almost surely to escalate the war in Vietnam, contrary to the impression they successfully conveyed to the public. That would replay the history of 1964, of which I had been a parti-

cipant in the Pentagon. I hoped the public would forestall that, if they became aware of it. The Pentagon Papers demonstrated the pattern of deliberate deception in earlier periods, even though the study did not go beyond 1968. The public, if they could read these documents, was capable of seeing the possible analogies to the present and suspecting the worst, which happened to be the reality. That was why release of this largely-Democratic history caused such panic in a Republican Administration. And it was why releasing the history turned out to be a useful act.

*the hidden history of*  
It is why I hope, now, that a discussion of our national past as bombers -- ~~USAF doctrine and practice of strategic bombing, nuclear power plans, the Bomb~~ -- will turn out to be useful.

Q: ~~When exposing hidden facts or history is likely to promote a sense of guilt ... is that really helpful? Is that really an effective motivation? The same question applies to indicting people.~~  
But if these exposures are likely, mainly,

DE: What we want is change -- not paralyzing guilt, or punishment or revenge. You're right that guilt isn't a reliable motivation -- to say the least -- for the kind of change we want. <sup>yet</sup> ~~But~~ one way of describing the change we're talking about here is that we want our country, and other countries, to stop committing certain massive crimes, and to stop planning and preparing to commit them. And to stop pretending that these intentions and preparations aren't evil, stop legitimating them.

I think the notion of crime, of evil or wrong, is useful  
(Perhaps I differ from Ram Dass on this point).  
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nuclear actions in that light -- which would follow for many of them if the facts could be gotten through to them -- many will act determinedly to prevent its being done again.

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(56-59 omitted)

*admit that it's hard and calls for special awareness,*  
separated -- though ~~we don't often do it~~ -- from the notions  
of guilt, blame, indictment, accusation, punishment, which are  
much less helpful psychologically and politically and which  
arouse harmful counteractions and defenses.

People want to avoid participating in evil crimes -- like  
planning or committing massacre -- not only because they want  
to avoid punishment and feeling guilty, <sup>or going on trial.</sup> Humans want to do  
what is right, to be good. They are, certainly, very open to  
manipulation by authorities and to self-deception on this  
score. But in this country above all, they can also get  
information against the will of authorities that can change  
their minds.

The point of revealing history that has been guiltily  
kept secret, in my mind, is not to punish criminals or past  
crimes. It is not to hold war crimes trials, even quasi ones.  
The point is to help us stop crimes that are going on right  
now, with our ignorant participation, and to prevent others  
that are being planned and prepared. To do that it is impor-  
tant to recognize them as crimes, and for that a background of  
history can be indispensable. Granted, either buried guilt or  
what I have called a sense of potential guilt throws up resis-  
tances to seeking the understanding we need for change. There  
may be ways to surmount that, to the extent that it rests on  
fear, fear of reprisal or punishment.

In Santa Rita jail after our last blockade at Livermore  
Laboratory, some of the twelve ministers who were arrested  
with us asked me to join one of their discussions. In the



course of it one of them commented that neither we as a nation nor any of our leaders had ever asked the Japanese people to forgive us for what we had done to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Maybe this would be a good thing for ministers to promote. I pointed out that most Americans didn't feel there was anything to be forgiven, given their understanding of the motives and circumstances of the bombing. To be sure, their understanding is mistaken, and a first step would be to find a way to change that.

I didn't spell out why this was important, but I'll say it now. Nearly all Americans accept an account of Hiroshima that gravely misleads them on the important question: What does it take to get an American President to drop a nuclear weapon on people? In the case of the one President who did do that, most Americans infer that to get him to blot out the lives of 300,000 people with two nuclear weapons required -- in the minds of his top military and civilian advisors and his own mind -- the otherwise-inevitable prospect of an indefinite continuation of the war against Japan, and an invasion that would cost a million U.S. lives. Such circumstances seem quite unlikely to recur.

But those were not, in fact, the circumstances that led to the death of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The fallacy is comforting, but it is also dangerous. It doesn't prepare Americans to imagine -- it makes it easy to conceal from them -- that every one of the Presidents they have elected since Truman has threatened or engaged secretly in serious discus-

sion and preparations for possible imminent U.S. first-use of nuclear weapons. And every case involved circumstances much less desperate, and much more likely to recur in the future, than those Americans wrongly suppose confronted Harry Truman in July and August 1945. So the public sense of risk and urgency is less than realistic.

Yet this is one of several important issues in which it is hard to mount investigations or begin a process of public education, because of widespread opposition to ~~of~~ recrimination, ~~of~~ finger-pointing, conflicts over punishment. Far from being willing to admit guilt or even recognize crime, we are not even ready, as a nation, to perceive the possibility that what was done could reasonably be challenged that way. Semi-consciously, I suspect, we know that if it was wrong at all, it was very, very wrong. As a result we are going along ignorantly with preparations to do it again.

Maybe, I suggested to the ministers, what was needed was for Americans <sup>as individuals, and each other</sup> to forgive ourselves for what we might have done or left undone in the nuclear era. We need to forgive ourselves as citizens, as tax-payers, as parents, as humans; and as employees of the Pentagon, the White House, the nuclear

laboratories .... but not at all in order to forget and to put what has been done under the rug. <sup>Rather, precisely in order to remember, at last, to seek understanding</sup> ~~Rather,~~ Perhaps we should <sup>and change.</sup>

simply <sup>offer</sup> ~~issue~~ each other amnesty, <sup>issue</sup> ~~recommend~~ a blanket pardon -- the kind that Presidents get -- for whatever wrong we may have done, <sup>Assure each other in advance that there will be</sup> ~~so far, no trials, no prison, no punishment of indi-~~ <sup>STET</sup> ~~viduals.~~ <sup>or even invidious condemnation</sup> ~~STET~~ so that we may dare together for the first time to



~~No question of trial, no prison, no punishment or even punishment~~ <sup>invidious</sup>  
~~condemnation of individuals~~

look into the question of our use of the Bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and in "atomic diplomacy" since then. Self-forgiveness might free us to look clearly, at last, at what we have done, <sup>and left undone,</sup> so that we can learn from it. It might permit us, with less fear, to discover wrong, even evil where it has been done by us, so that we can begin to learn how to stop doing it.

Q: The same is true about our actions in Vietnam and elsewhere.

DE: Yes.



In the present situation the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal is a grave danger to us -- and to themselves, and to the rest of the world. As is our own. Whatever danger Soviet weapons were in 1960, they are a much larger danger now, just as ours now pose a larger danger to ourselves and everyone.\*

<sup>But</sup>  
~~And~~ as most people outside governments can perceive, the interaction of U.S. and Soviet nuclear programs and plans is by far the most dangerous threat to each of us -- and to human survival -- dwarfing any unilateral challenges that either one poses to the interests of the other.

But that interaction has gone through two rather sharply different phases in the post-war period. It's important for the public to learn this, because the shift -- in the direction of increasing danger -- was influenced greatly by U.S. policies. Those policies continue, to increasingly dangerous effect. And they have relied greatly, I would say, on public ignorance of the realities both of Soviet programs and posture and of the U.S.' policies.

The common perception of the Soviets being locked with us for 38 years in a race for nuclear superiority is a myth -- just as the belief in a "race" with Germany to get the Bomb was mistaken after 1942. A two-way "race" didn't really start in a serious way until the mid-sixties, almost twenty years

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\* Each nation could now cause hemispheric, possibly global, "nuclear winter" with a small fraction of its own weapons. According to Carl Sagan, the U.S. stockpile attained that capability in about 1953, the Soviet Union in 1970, or with less assurance by 1964.



into the nuclear era. That second phase began essentially when Khrushchev was replaced by Brezhnev (or just before).

From the time of Hiroshima, the Russians did try to reproduce any technical achievement of ours as quickly as they could, which in most cases involved a rather standard lag of about three to five years. (Although the Soviets are often presented as having had the H-bomb sooner, in fact they got it well after the U.S. did.)\* The one case where they were ahead of us, actually, was in the testing of large intercontinental ballistic missiles, which they started about a year before we were able to. But we still installed operational ICBMs before they did, as well as deploying a lot more of them. So at almost every step we have been ahead of them.

But that, too, is misleading as a picture of the nuclear arms competition in the first phase, from 1945 to 1963. Once having matched our technical achievements in tests, they did not then proceed to produce a large number of weapons, with the exception of medium and intermediate range missiles aimed at Europe. They began producing these in large numbers from the late '50s on. But until about 1964, they produced very few bombers, ICBMs, and sub-launched missiles.

Thus, in the early years of the nuclear era, the U.S. was really the only party "racing," except in a technical sense. They were far behind us in available forces and capabilities, *and they weren't trying to match us.* Because of Khrushchev's

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\*See Herbert York, The Advisors: Oppenheimer, Teller and the Superbomb, (University of California, San Diego) pp. 10, 89-93.

choice not even to seek parity, or anything approaching it, we were the only country in the world who had the ability to disarm the opponent, or even to think of disarming the opponent. Only the United States could have struck the opponent without incurring massive retaliation. And to put it the other way around, only the U.S. could assure an attacker of devastating retaliation as a basis for deterring an attack on itself.

That's totally against the public's impression, of course. We kept hearing about the Soviets being on the verge of superiority to us -- in the mid-'50s, the bomber gap that they were supposed to have, and later the missile gap in the late '50s. Americans were always being told that we were just behind. Thus, we have grown up with this picture that we have barely beaten them out each time. That's never been true. Up through the Khrushchev era, it had no relation to reality at all, even in terms of what the Soviets were attempting.

As a result, by 1961 we had fifteen bombers and twenty nuclear warheads on missiles within range of the Soviet Union for every Soviet bomber and missile that could reach the U.S. Khrushchev had strong reason to back down in confrontations, as he did not only in "our" sphere in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 but on the border of the Communist sphere in the Taiwan Straits in 1958 (the Quemoy crisis) and within the Soviet bloc itself in the Berlin crisis in 1961. And that reason was not just the balance, or imbalance, of nuclear stockpiles. What mattered above all was the use, in threats, that the U.S. made of its weapons and its superiority in



strategic delivery capability (which amounted to near-monopoly -- a condition that can never be regained, or approximated, by either side).

Pic of DE & Audience

DE: How many people remember the Berlin Crisis in July of 1961? Who recalls Kennedy urging all of us to buy fallout shelters before the end of the year in case of a thermonuclear war?

A good number. [Pointing] You weren't very old then.

Q: Eleven.

DE: What do you remember of that?

Q: Just that we were all going to go up in smoke.

DE: How did that come through to you? Do you remember?

Q: Fear.

DE: No, I mean how did you learn about it? From your parents?

Q: Probably from television.

DE: Who else remembers anything?

Q: In grammar school I remember bomb practice and running out in the hallway and taking our little uniform jackets off and putting them over our heads.

DE: You <sup>covered your heads.</sup> ~~took your jackets off.~~

pic of DE      reaction pic

(laughter) Well, why not? Try anything. What do you remember?

Q: I was visiting a cousin who worked for HEW, and she showed me a paper she brought home from work listing who was considered "expendable," in case we all couldn't get into shelters.

DE: And where did you fit?

Q: In the women over childbearing age category. I was expendable. Also, all children who couldn't take care of themselves were expendable. When it came to males who could bear arms, however, they jumped to 60 years old, the age of the generals. They were not deemed expendable.

DE: You would show this paper at the door of the shelter and say, "Now, I'm asking for sanctuary"? Many people do remember the controversy associated with the shelters, which was the





only time I recall that thermonuclear war evoked a major ethical row among churchmen, until this last year or two. The issue was whether it was Christian to arm yourself with a machine gun to keep out your neighbors who had not provided themselves with a shelter. How many remember? You remember how that came out? I think it was generally concluded that it was within the "just war" doctrine to defend one's family if the improvident neighbor had not built a fallout shelter, or it leaked, or they ran out of reading material. You were within your rights to repel them.

How many people here who remember the Berlin Crisis had it clearly in mind that President Kennedy was talking about a thermonuclear exchange that would not be started by the Soviet Union?

One person. You understood that? How did you have that insight?

Q: A military man told me.

DE: That's interesting. But, you see, it follows from what I've just been saying. We had 3,000 bombers and over 200 missiles in range of Russia at that time.

What the Soviets had in range of the U.S. in 1961 was 194 intercontinental bombers and exactly four ICBMs. So Kennedy was not really worried that the Soviets would start a nuclear war, with their four ICBMs.

Yet the rest of you -- like most Americans -- didn't know

that. The nuclear war that you were led to worry about, a Soviet-initiated escalation or surprise attack, was a mirage. The nuclear operations that might really have occurred if the Soviets had destroyed or captured our ground probes to Berlin and threatened our reinforcements -- the nuclear war that threatened both the Soviets and Americans at home, that called for U.S. fallout shelters -- would have been begun by the U.S.

We would not have been starting the war, as we saw it. Rather we would have been responding to the Soviet efforts to prevent us from moving forcefully on the ground into Berlin. We would have been escalating a non-nuclear conflict, first by using tactical nuclear weapons, and then, if the Soviets didn't back down, with our strategic weapons against Russia.

Berlin was, in effect, an island in East Germany. And there were seven Soviet divisions in the vicinity of Berlin, 20 or so within East Germany, plus East German divisions. There was no way that we could outnumber them on the ground, any more than we could match or outnumber them in Iran. This has nothing to do with the overall balance or the fact that they have a draft. It has to do with the area in which conflict might occur, that area being next to Russian territory or surrounded by Soviet troops.

To protect our interests in Berlin we invoked the threat of initiating nuclear war. That's what we were threatening. Kennedy threatened this and the Soviets were meant to hear it, although the American people were not. That's why you haven't been told to this day what the actual overall military balance



was; it remains top secret.

If you look in most history books right now you'll read that "there wasn't any missile gap." They tell you the Soviets had "about 50" missiles -- not 1,000, as the Strategic Air Command had claimed, not 120-160 as CIA had estimated that spring, but 50.

But that figure is inflated by an "order of magnitude," a factor of ten. They didn't really have 50 intercontinental missiles; they had 4. There was a missile gap, after all: enormously in our favor. (Ten to one in ICBMs; fifty to one in ballistic warheads in range of each other, including intermediate-range and sub-launched missiles).


Fifty Soviet ICBMs would have meant two for almost every major SAC base in this country, a significant number. Four ICBMs was no missiles, essentially. (Their four above-ground, non-alert, liquid-fueled SS-6s, on a single pad at Plesetsk, could easily have been destroyed by a single U.S. plane with non-nuclear weapons.)

That is the reality that has never been declassified. It was soon to change.

A generation later, we're still faced off with the Soviets in Berlin. We're still persuaded that we have "vital interests" in numerous other places, some of them, like Iran, on the border of the Soviet Union. Particularly in those latter places where the Soviets inevitably have a non-nuclear advantage, we're still relying on first-use nuclear threats to protect our interests. But the chances that the Soviet

leaders will back down in a confrontation are significantly lower than before, and the consequences if they don't, a good deal worse. Because the Soviets don't have just four measly missiles any more. Twenty years ago, Phase Two of the nuclear era ensued.

In good part precisely because of the backdowns he was forced to make, Khrushchev was fired. Brezhnev came in, with the support of the military; he promised them they would never again have to back down by reason of nuclear inferiority. He would spend whatever it took to reach and maintain equality with us. He did that; and his successors seem absolutely determined to keep doing it. That means that when we deploy new capabilities, you should bet that the Soviets will develop and (unlike Khrushchev) deploy comparable capabilities as soon as they can -- whether or not that seems to be in their long-term interests. ¶ In effect, the replacement of Khrushchev and the subsequent Soviet build-up ever since 1964 was the price of our successes in nuclear crises in Quemoy and Berlin and Cuba, along with our reluctance to negotiate a comprehensive test ban that would have halted our own build-up as well as preventing theirs. The price was high.





Q: Might not the Soviet buildup to parity have had one good effect: that the U.S. would no longer be tempted to make first-use threats?

DE: Soviet parity should have had that effect. But it didn't. By 1964, even the most committed advocate of deterrence-by-first-use-threats should have concluded that that game was over forever, that the risks had become intolerable. But twenty years have gone by, and the game still hasn't ended. U.S. Presidents have continued to make threats against allies of the Soviet Union or the Soviets themselves in the very same circumstances as before. And these circumstances are likely to keep on arising, under our present policies and perceptions of our rights and "vital interests." The risks have, as you suggest, become much larger than before, and they've been growing sharply in the last few years. But apparently they are still tolerable, in the eyes of our last five Presidents.

In 1968, when U.S. Marines were surrounded at Khe Sanh in South Vietnam, active consideration was given at the White House to the possible need to defend them with tactical nuclear weapons. General Westmoreland warned they might be necessary if an attack came in bad flying weather (he still thinks they should have been used, to "send a signal"). A flurry of "leaks" effectively got the message to our Vietnamese opponents, who chose not to attack. No change there, despite parity, from every other case in the Cold War era in

which U.S. or allied troops were surrounded and in danger of being overwhelmed: Berlin 1948; Korea 1950; Indochina 1954 (the French rejected our offer of nuclear weapons to defend Dienbienphu); Quemoy 1958; Berlin 1961.

When Nixon inherited a costly stalemate in Vietnam in 1969 -- as Eisenhower had in Korea in 1953 -- he decided to break through it the same way his former boss did. He made secret threats of massive escalation, including the possible use of nuclear weapons. (He knew more about Eisenhower's secret ultimatum than the rest of us, having been Vice President at the time.) His only concession to the new situation of parity was to have his emissary, Henry Kissinger, express the threat in terms of "possible" rather than certain use of nuclear weapons. But the nuclear targets were picked, and detailed planning folders were delivered to the White House.3

In 1973, Brezhnev proposed a joint U.S./Soviet peace-keeping force to enforce the ceasefire in the Mideast war. He warned that he was preparing to put Soviet troops into Egypt unilaterally for that purpose if the U.S. would not join him. U.S. strategic nuclear forces worldwide were put on the highest level of alert since the Cuban Missile Crisis, to signal White House determination to oppose a Soviet "peacekeeping" presence in the Mideast with U.S. combat forces willing to go to nuclear war if necessary. (The major objective of this nuclear threat was to exclude the Soviet Union from a legitimate military presence in the region and from participation in regional peace negotiations. It is interesting to note the



parallel to the actual motives of Truman and Byrnes in the very first "use" of nuclear weapons.) The U.S. was warning that the undesired Soviet actions, which the U.S. wished to deter, would lead to direct U.S./Soviet combat involvement; this would in turn have a high probability of escalating to nuclear war.

The Carter Doctrine in 1980 amounted to precisely the same sort of nuclear threat for the Middle East as a whole, focused on the area adjacent to the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. White House backgrounders took pains to make it clear that what was being threatened was a confrontation with U.S. forces that would escalate to nuclear warfare by U.S. initiative if the Soviets did not back off. As Secretary of Defense Harold Brown put it in his last interview in office, what would keep the Russians out of northern Iran was "the risk of World War III."

President Reagan used almost the same words the next month, his first in office. What was needed, he told interviewers, was a U.S. ground presence in the Middle East not large enough to stop the Soviet Union -- "We know we couldn't do that" -- but large enough to assure them a "confrontation that could become World War III." World War III launched, with nuclear weapons, by whom? Not by the Soviets. According to Pentagon studies under Carter, they would outnumber our expeditionary force by twenty to one, not because they have a bigger army or a draft, but because Iran is on their border. We could no more match Soviet non-nuclear strength in the

northern Middle East than the Soviets could block us from the oil or gas of Mexico or Canada with conventional forces.

To protect U.S. control of the distribution of the oil of the Persian Gulf, Carter and Reagan have relied on the same strategy in the '80s that Eisenhower and Kennedy used to protect the U.S. position in Berlin a generation earlier. The same threat: to burn and freeze the Northern Hemisphere, if the Soviets didn't back down from a use of conventional force. ~~F~~ For the same reason: a perception of "vital U.S. interest" in a region that happens to be on the Soviet border or surrounded by Soviet divisions. All that has changed is the strategic balance, and with it the assurance that the Soviets will back down in a future confrontation.

Over two decades Brezhnev invested over a trillion dollars on nuclear and other hardware to match the U.S. and reverse that assurance. He convinced me that the risks of trying to back the Soviets down with nuclear threats are higher than they were in 1962. I may be easy to convince; but I doubt that Carter would really disagree that the risks had risen, let alone Reagan. (After all, Reagan actually says the Soviets are "superior," which is ignorant or crazy, if he isn't kidding.) How can it be <sup>our presidents</sup> ~~that they~~ are still committing us to such risks? That becomes less unimaginable when we consider the risks that Presidents were already accepting for us in the era before parity.

In 1962, President Kennedy privately estimated the odds on nuclear war in the Cuban Missile Crisis between one in



three and even. That shocked me when I heard it just after the crisis ended. I had been working day and night in the Pentagon for a week on strategies to make the Russians back down. I had put the risks much lower than that. I knew what the nuclear balance was. <sup>(give it)</sup> So I wasn't too worried, actually. Everybody outside Washington was, but I figured they didn't know how much the balance was tipped in our favor. Sleeping in the Pentagon a few hours a night, I slept well. I didn't know any better.

It seemed to me that the Russians had to back down. ↓ I was 31 years old; unlike Kennedy, I had never yet been in a war. A few years later, when I got an intense education in wartime confusion, military momentum, and reckless fear of retreat, I realized that Kennedy's estimate had not been exaggerated after all.

But even in 1962, when I heard that judgment by Kennedy -- and that of Paul Nitze, my boss, whose estimate was even higher -- I was stunned. What shocked me was not the estimate but the apparent recklessness. I could hardly imagine that the President had been choosing to do what we were doing -- preparing a strike on the Russian missiles in Cuba and the invasion of Cuba -- when he believed the risks of general war were that high.

We were not planning to use nuclear weapons first in Cuba (although Kennedy did promise a "full retaliatory strike against the Soviet Union" if a single missile was launched from Cuba -- e.g., by Castro -- in the heat of our attack). We have no

more need to rely on first-use threats in the Caribbean, where our conventional superiority is vast, than the Soviets would in Turkey or Berlin. That's true today. The link to general war from a conflict in Cuba -- then or now -- would be a Soviet choice to expand or transfer the conflict to an area where they had a conventional superiority. (Secretary Weinberger calls this tactic "horizontal escalation." He plans to use it.) <sup>R In 1962</sup> They could <sup>have</sup> match<sup>d</sup> our blockade of Cuba with a blockade of Berlin. They could respond to attacks on their intermediate-range missiles in Cuba by attacking our intermediate-range missiles then based in Turkey. Either of those would have put the prestige and cohesion of NATO in question, invoking our full treaty commitment to NATO. In those days our plans and preparations for conflict in either place involved early initiation of nuclear warfare, unless the Soviets retreated almost at once. <sup>R</sup> Kennedy's estimate of the odds on general war reflected his guess that they might try one or both of those responses. I spent Saturday afternoon, the climax of the crisis, helping define "alternative options" for our response to their hitting the IRBMs in Turkey. Our attack on their IRBMs in Cuba, which might have triggered their retaliation, was then scheduled for Monday. At that moment, Robert Kennedy was at the Soviet Embassy, delivering a 48-hour ultimatum to Ambassador Dobrynin.

As Kennedy perceived, there would have been a certain logic in Russian retaliation against our IRBMs in Turkey. Turkey borders the Soviet Union. Kennedy was demanding that

the Soviets remove a "threat" they were in process of installing "90 miles from our shores" which happened to be identical to the threat we had installed a few years earlier adjacent to their territory. The issue was whether the Soviets had a right to do on our borders what we were doing on their borders. (The real issue, of course, was whether they had the power to do it, not the right.) <sup>were saying, in effect,</sup> We ~~said~~, "No, we can do it but you can't. That's the difference between us." And in 1962, Russia had to acknowledge that it was the difference between us. Then they set out, through their arms buildup of the '60s and '70s, to eliminate that difference.

Meanwhile, in 1962, Kennedy was virtually certain that if he had to carry out his ultimatum and invade Cuba, the Soviets would blockade Berlin. That would have meant a replay of the Berlin crisis of 1961. Kennedy had not been at all certain that Khrushchev would back down that time, either. It was a gamble. Even though it was a gamble the U.S. was likely to win, the odds on nuclear war were not one in a million. They looked much higher, closer to the one in three that Kennedy estimated the next year.

Robert McNamara has recently indicated that he was privately determined never to initiate nuclear war under any circumstances, and that he believed President Kennedy shared this determination. Yet the odds were significantly high for nuclear war in both these crises even <sup>assuming</sup> ~~if it were~~ true that both men -- before the initial combat clashes -- shared this resolve to avoid it. (Kennedy's estimate in 1962, reported by



his closest associate Theodore Sorensen, indicates that he understood this.) Unless Kennedy had been willing to back down in a Berlin challenge without even initiating conventional probes on the ground -- and no one has suggested that he was -- events would have been likely to override any prior, personal reservations against carrying out his clear public commitments to first-use when necessary, commitments embodied in NATO and U.S. planning and preparations. In fact, once combat forces were joined in Central Europe, events could quickly have moved entirely beyond his control.

In both years, Kennedy's actions implied acceptance of these risks. And the stakes were vast. Even though the Soviets had only four operational ICBMs in the first year and ten in <sup>October 1962</sup> ~~the second~~ (with 60-70 under construction), they had about 600 SS-4 and SS-5 intermediate-range missiles with one-megaton warheads. Even striking first, we could not have counted on preventing Europe's annihilation by ~~getting~~ <sup>destroying</sup> nearly all of those before they were launched.

A nuclear conflict over Berlin -- perhaps arising in a conflict involving Cuba -- would probably have resulted in the deaths of most Europeans, East and West. [And though Kennedy did not know it, no Soviet ICBMs at all were needed to include the U.S., as well, in the general holocaust. Given the scale and nature of U.S. general war plans at the time, U.S. citizens would have been almost totally exterminated by the "nuclear winter" brought about by the explosion of U.S. warheads on the Soviet bloc, if Khrushchev had failed to back down and Kennedy

had carried out his threats.]

Even though the risks that threats will fail and lead to nuclear war are significantly higher now in the era of parity, they were high enough twenty years ago -- given the stakes -- to make the difference seem marginal. If John F. Kennedy felt compelled to take the gambles he did -- and Eisenhower before him, especially in the Quemoy Crisis of 1958 -- we need not be astounded to find current leaders betting the world, for interests that seem "vital" only by the standards of a pre-thermonuclear era.

Q: If we made it clear that we were not ready to initiate nuclear war under any circumstances, then the Soviets could say they'll just take over Europe like they did Poland, and that they are willing to use nuclear weapons. So if you're not ready to do the same, I guess the game is theirs.

DE: That's like saying that there would be no way to defend Western Europe from Russia if nuclear weapons had never been invented. And that's really not true.

Q: We could use conventional warfare. But what if they were willing to use their nuclear weapons?

DE: I'm assuming the U.S. would maintain a capability to retaliate to Soviet first-use, either tactical or strategic. The Soviets would be taking on themselves the same risks we

would be in starting it. Either side that initiates nuclear war is taking on itself enormous suicidal risks.

Q: But they'd be taking on significantly less risk if we were on record as saying we would not use ours first.

DE: Strictly speaking, the Soviets are on the record now as saying they will not initiate nuclear war. How much does that weaken them by saying that?

Q: I don't think it weakens them; I don't think it really limits their options.

DE: Why would it weaken us if we said the same?

Q: It wouldn't. But partly, the thing is that they and we don't do what we say we will or won't do a lot of times.

DE: It's true that just saying it doesn't change the situation very much. But once having said it, each can be challenged to implement that policy, by removing from Europe all weapons that are only suited for first-use, because they are vulnerable to nuclear attack. That would mean removing every land-based nuclear weapon in Europe, East and West (including tactical weapons in the western Soviet Union.) That would be an impressive change. NATO could meanwhile be preparing to defend itself without relying on nuclear first-use. It has



more than enough resources to draw on, far more than the Warsaw Pact.

We are told by our government that NATO neither has non-nuclear capability to defend itself nor could feasibly have it. The truth is that the NATO bloc has a much larger GNP, more advanced technology, and larger population than the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. If you take Western Europe alone, its population is larger than that of Russia. The draft-age male pool has always been larger, and -- here is a little surprise, just a simple figure on the record: ~~✓~~ Since the mid-1950s, NATO has usually had more men under arms than Russia and the Warsaw Pact nations. It fluctuates a bit year by year, and for the last couple of years Russia and the Warsaw Pact have had somewhat more, maybe a hundred or two hundred thousand men more than NATO. But most years NATO has had more men under arms.

To defend without nuclear weapons, NATO should be better deployed, better integrated, have larger stocks and faster mobilization, tank obstacles, and so forth; the necessary improvements should cost less than Reagan is calling for with a nuclear strategy. (And keep in mind that NATO can't "defend" itself<sup>2</sup> at all by using nuclear weapons in combat.) The Soviets have some advantages. They have an ability to mobilize people somewhat faster than we do. They have many more tanks; we have many more anti-tank weapons, and we could have a lot more than we do. If you look at underlying strength, the two sides are very evenly balanced on non-nuclear capabil-

ity. NATO already has an enormous non-nuclear capability. It's not at all true that NATO has relied mainly on nuclear weapons because it is necessarily deficient in non-nuclear ~~forces~~ capability.

Q: So you are saying that both sides are potentially pretty well matched both in conventional forces and in nuclear weapons.

DE: Yes, that's right.

Q: But the atmosphere seems to be such that -- take the way the Soviets went into Poland. You don't think that justifies warfare, what they did to Poland?

DE: I don't think it's something that we can remedy by warfare without blowing the world up.

Q: So then isn't that a clear message to the Russians that we don't think it's worth going to war for West Germany, for example? Doesn't that undercut deterrence?

DE: No. Here is the difference. They've been sitting with troops in Poland and East Germany for over 30 years now; that's been part of their empire, their sphere of influence. If we went into Poland, we would initiate World War III; that would be true even if non-first-use were observed by both sides, or if nuclear weapons had never existed. It's equally

clear that if they went into West Germany (or Saudi Arabia, even though we don't have troops there now) they would have World War III on their hands; and that sure knowledge is a strong deterrent. Nuclear weapons aren't critical to that in either case; ~~World War III~~ <sup>a major US/Soviet war</sup> fought with conventional weapons is a very adequate deterrent.

Russian policy shows a very consistent determination not to give up something that they are holding or that they control; they clearly will not submit to that. But they haven't shown that they are willing to take major risks or even minor risks to acquire additional territory. What they are defending now is exactly where their armies sat in May 1945, with the exception of Afghanistan, which is on their border.

Thirty years later, as Poland reveals, their degree of dominance in the countries of Eastern Europe has no legitimacy in any real sense. It is just as imperial as our chosen regime of generals and terrorists in El Salvador, or other underdeveloped countries where we have that kind of control. After Lenin, Marxists came to a definition of imperialism that identified it with capitalism. The truth is that empire as a reality and a concept existed long before capitalism and, it turns out, exists after capitalism. Getting rid of capitalism does not get rid of domination or hierarchy or exploitation, including domination and exploitation of other countries by stronger "socialist" powers.

Profit in a technical sense doesn't have to be a motive for such domination. There's a variety of motives: <sup>(for both superpowers)</sup> the



exploitation of natural resources, favorable terms of trade,  
cheap labor, strategic locations, prestige, <sup>and perhaps above all,</sup> ~~or just~~ maintain-  
ing a domestic status quo in the homeland. Undoubtedly the  
Russians believe that if they lost their grip on East Europe  
and allowed it to evolve in new ways, those same new ways  
would have a tendency to penetrate into Russia, destabilizing  
the rule of the Party and the status of managers and the  
military. So they are protecting a particular power struc-  
ture. Russia itself was typically thought of as an empire  
before 1917, as a collection of peoples with considerable  
centripetal forces. That is still true.

Most experts on the Middle East don't think that the  
Soviets have any active plans for moving militarily or for  
establishing strong controls over countries in the Middle  
East. The Soviets know all too well the danger that would be  
involved. They believe that our government would fight to the  
death to protect U.S. oil interests there. They are right.  
That's a reality which they quite clearly perceive. They are  
not likely to challenge us there.

On the other hand, I am not impressed by the argument  
that simply because they are socialist and because they have a  
great deal of oil of their own, the Russians would have no  
desire whatever to have the kind of control over that oil that  
we have. The fact is we don't use most of the oil ourselves;  
we sell it, to Europe and Japan. And the Russians need foreign  
exchange; the Russians could sell it as well as our corporations.  
We also establish political influence with it. The Russians

would not reject that political influence if they had the chance to have it. The issue is whether they would fight us to acquire those benefits. Almost certainly they would not, even if the war could be guaranteed to remain non-nuclear.

So it is a question of great powers playing what is to some extent a game of imperial competition, within certain limits and rules.

In the 19th century the competition in Afghanistan between Britain and Russia was called the Great Game. But for some time now, Afghanistan has been regarded as being within the Russian sphere of influence, just as Central America has been considered part of our sphere of influence. The Russians will take no risks to defend anyone in Central America or the Caribbean (with the possible exception of Cuba). But when a rebellion broke out next-door in Afghanistan against a pro-Soviet regime, they sent in troops.

We're seeing comparable rebellions in Central America, and we're intervening and preparing to send in troops. It is very similar behavior. This doesn't mean we are about ready to invade Poland, and they know that. And they're not about to invade West Germany or the Middle East, for the same reason. Neither side is about to relinquish influence over "its" prized sphere, and neither is willing to risk World War III by threatening the other's sphere.

Each side describes the other as expansionist and aggressive. What is the reality? A sphere of influence is traditionally defined as an area where a great power acts as if it has

a right and a need to intervene with armed force if there is a rebellion, if someone tries to change the government or its policies against the great power's perceived interest. When you look at the Soviet sphere and the U.S. or Western sphere, you find that neither side has pushed into the other nation's sphere very much at all in <sup>nearly 40</sup> ~~30~~ years. They have mounted violent operations only against rebellions in their own sphere, or what they regarded as their own sphere. That's quite contrary to the mythology, to the image of the Cold War, in which each side portrays itself as endlessly fending off the other's lust to commit territorial "aggression" at the first opportunity.

Each side claims and even believes that rebellions in its own sphere are aided by the other superpower. There is some truth to this. But each side enormously exaggerates the degree and the critical role of that interference. They do that in order to justify their own repressive operation. They also tend to deceive themselves about the popularity and the competence of their own rule and their local puppets. They can't believe that the "locals" could be giving them so much trouble on their own; they must be getting crucial advice, management, and arms from outside agitators, and ultimately from a suitably respectable adversary, preferably a superpower. The imperial power finds it almost impossible to take the force of local nationalism seriously.

Is the West without influence in Poland? No. No doubt, the CIA, Polish-Americans, the Pope and various others have funneled money to Solidarity. But to regard Solidarity -- as



the Russians depict it -- as a CIA plot against them, that's crazy. It is an enormous Polish movement. Neither the CIA nor the KGB have the ability to whistle up such a vast, dedicated, well-organized campaign. Yet the Russians and the Polish Party use the excuse that Solidarity is a CIA plot to justify their repressive measures against it. The same is true for resistance movements in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan. In every one of those cases there was some degree of Western influence; but to see it as pivotal (as Russian leaders may even believe) is surely wrong.

The Brezhnev Doctrine, which came up in regard to Czechoslovakia in 1968, was designed to prevent any Eastern "socialist" nation from leaving the Soviet-dominated sphere. Of course, the way Brezhnev explained it was that Czechoslovakia was being subverted by the West. It is the right and the obligation of the "Socialist Bloc" to protect "socialism" in Czechoslovakia, by invading it. That was also the claim made regarding Hungary, Afghanistan, and likewise Solidarity in Poland. In every case the Soviets said, "Our real opponent is the CIA, it's the U.S. -- not the local people -- and to prevent these foreign machinations we must protect those good communists who are on our side in those countries. That justifies our troops going in." The Cold War has helped Soviet leaders to present these operations favorably to their own citizens, who don't want to think of themselves as dominating those countries; they prefer to hear that their army is "protecting" them.

In the same fashion, the U.S. has acted decisively to defend Lebanon, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Taiwan/ Quemoy, and El Salvador from "Russian intervention and control." It is now lending its good offices to this end in Nicaragua, <sup>conducting an open "covert" war against its government.</sup> In place of preserving "socialism" we say "freedom <sup>for more cautiously in El Salvador. We are protecting</sup> and democracy." <sup>In most cases, these terms are twisted euphemisms for regimes of corrupt torturers -- regimes that are ferociously unfree and anti-democratic, but are subservient, "pro-American" and roughly capitalist.</sup>

The alleged "Russian threat" to Guatemala in 1954 was essentially imaginary. Likewise to Chile in 1970-73, to the Dominican Republic in 1965, to Lebanon in 1958 or Iran 1953. Russian threats to the "independence and self-determination" of these targets of U.S. intervention were, in each case, as illusory as the threats posed to our "retaliatory" nuclear forces by the bomber gap, the missile gap, and the recent "window of vulnerability."

I was employed in the Pentagon when Lyndon Johnson pointed to the threat of communist takeover in the Dominican Republic in explaining why we were compelled to land 20,000 Marines there. Now, you might well have thought communists were everywhere, at least in moderate numbers, like tuberculosis germs. The truth was that <sup>our government</sup> ~~we~~ couldn't find any communists to speak of in the Dominican Republic at that time, much as it was desired to back up the President's assertion. I was reading the cables <sup>at the time.</sup> According to our intelligence, there were about 11 identifiable communists in the whole country. It was

a virtually communist-free environment. Still, Johnson stuck to his public account that we were protecting the Dominican Republic against communism.

After all, what other reason could he give for invading? To prevent the return of the elected president Juan Bosch, who had been ousted by a military/business coup with our blessing? That would have been true -- but less stirring, somehow.

In all these struggles against communism, we haven't had to take on the risk of fighting Russians. There weren't any Russian troops in any of those places. Except for the Berlin and Cuban confrontations, and the Chinese we met in North Korea, our troops have faced only indigenous forces. And when possible -- as in Guatemala in 1954, for 18 years in Vietnam, and so far in Nicaragua and El Salvador -- we have paid others to do our fighting for us. ~~Brezhnev was equally circumspect in applying his Doctrine.~~

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[Item -- San Francisco Chronicle, April 10, 1984:

"Nicaragua asked the International Court of Justice yesterday to order a stop to U.S.-sponsored mining of its ports and attacks on its territory ...

"Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto ... charged that the U.S. secret war is 'nothing less than a direct assault on the international legal order and constitutes an attempt to bring international behavior back to the Stone Age concept that might makes right.'

"In its lawsuit, Nicaragua charged 'the United States is recruiting, training, arming, equipping, financing, sup-



plying and otherwise encouraging, supporting, aiding and directing military and paramilitary action in and against Nicaragua; in violation of international law, the U.N. charter and the charter of the Organization of American States.

"Nicaragua said more than 1300 of its citizens have been killed and more than \$200 million in damage to crops and physical facilities has been wrought by the U.S.-backed Contras operating in or near Nicaraguan territory....

"The United States informed the United Nations on Friday that, for the next two years, it will refuse to accept the World Court's jurisdiction on any cases arising from U.S. actions in Central America....

"Former Undersecretary of State George Ball said: 'The administration has determined that it is a law unto itself and should be able to do anything it damn well pleases, and shouldn't be inhibited by the rules of international law and the institutions we spent so much time building up.'

"Do we want to put ourselves at the level of the Russians?' Ball asked. 'I must say I think that's what we're doing. I think we're engaging in a Brezhnev Doctrine.' He compared U.S. policies toward leftist regimes in Latin America to the Soviet doctrine that it has a right to use military force to keep its neighbors in the communist fold."]

Moreover, you may have noticed, in the nearly forty years of the Cold War we have never yet actually fought Russia. We haven't killed any Russian troops. We haven't even shot at

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ABOVE

Brezhnev <sup>was</sup> ~~has~~ been equally circumspect in his application  
of The Doctrine.  
(Return to p. 92)

any. Nor have Russian units engaged ours. A

Breaks → Noam Chomsky's analysis, which I find very persuasive in

his Towards A New Cold War, is that the Cold War has been highly functional for both superpowers. It has provided a legitimating ideology for their domination of their own spheres of influence, against challenges basically from within those spheres. For each, the Cold War has justified bloody, costly and dangerous "police" operations which each has found necessary in its own sphere, against local or regional inhabitants.

From this point of view, the existence of NATO has served the Russians well. For our part, if we didn't have the Russians, we would have had to invent them. In a sense, we have invented them, as a Hitler-like entity, which is the way we want to imagine them. That's the most useful image of the Soviet Union for our government, especially, as now, for purposes of justifying interventions and the policy of arming ~~to~~ rather ~~than~~ negotiating.

The identification of Russia with Nazi Germany under Hitler -- the analogy Reagan relies on -- is the core of the Cold War ideology. We must look back to the Hitler period to see what that means, and what it has meant to us subliminally throughout the Cold War. It asserts that we are confronting a powerful opponent which is not only militarist, authoritarian, and dominating its neighbors -- Russia is all that, of course -- but expansionist in a special, unusual sense. The analogy suggests that our opponent sees its security and its prosperity

as dependent on rapid expansion even at high risk (as in the Nazi model). It implies a leader who really is willing to see the world blow up as a result of his gambles if he loses them, and one who has his sights set on conquering most or all of the world by military force quickly, in his own lifetime. A leader, therefore, who will break any treaty as quickly as he sees a short-term interest in doing so; a regime with which there are no common interests, and with which it is useless to negotiate, with which no treaty is worth anything. You might as well not have the treaty; it means nothing. In fact, treaties and even negotiations are positively harmful; they lull and mislead into vulnerability.

All these alleged characteristics of the Soviet regime are evoked by that Hitler image. They are often stated explicitly in <sup>the</sup> "vulgar ~~anti-Communist~~ <sup>press and pulpit</sup> and <sup>some</sup> speeches in Congress; and, unusually, in the Executive Branch under Reagan. But they are tacit premises underlying even sophisticated Cold War arguments that may explicitly purport to reject some parts of the analogy. That is especially true, under Reagan, of the central pessimism about the possibility of reaching useful, sustainable agreements and the desirability of even trying to do so.

That Russian leaders are strongly authoritarian and have a very large <sup>armed forces</sup> ~~army~~ is, of course, true. That they are dominating neighboring peoples is true. The other aspects of the identification have no basis in reality at all. Overall, it's a grossly misleading analogy. Could it become true under new



leaders? No doubt, just as it could become true of any country. But we are acting as if it were already true, and it is not.

Actually, when it comes to risk-taking, ~~of a certain type~~, our own leaders are so used to having been number one for so long that they exhibit a kind of recklessness rarely characteristic of their Soviet counterparts. The Soviet leaders know that they live in a world that is inhabited by a much stronger power and that they have to tread carefully. They have faced the threat of annihilation for the last thirty years, most of that with sharply inferior capability. They are not high risk-takers. (That doesn't mean they might not make a misjudgment, of course.)

Our officials, on the other hand, have more often acted in ways which could be considered provocative and risky. For example, it is risky to send troops into areas where they could be defended only by nuclear weapons. We keep on doing so without much concern because for years it wasn't as risky for us as it is today; we were far and away number one in nuclear terms, as in every other way.

We think of our own motives as defensive: just as the Soviets do, both leaders and public. The President certainly thinks of what he is doing as defensive. Yet for the most part he does not suppose that he is defending against what he says he is defending against -- the threat of an imminent Soviet surprise attack against us. That recurrent assertion is a hoax. It's like telling the public that we dropped the Bomb so that we wouldn't have to invade Japan. It is a con-

venient, plausible, and powerfully effective lie. It has never been the case that a President has believed us in imminent danger, or foreseeable danger, of surprise attack from the Soviet Union.

What our Marines, neutron bombs, Pershings and ICBMs protect is not the continental United States. They have very little to do with that. They protect a world-wide sphere of influence -- a region of American interests, so-called vital interests. A vital interest is one that you will fight for. It has turned out that we <sup>have (?)</sup> ~~had~~ vital interests, for example, in Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East; indeed in every part of the world up to the frontiers of Soviet control.

We have probably never had active military plans to send the Marines or the Army into Soviet-occupied countries. But we have perceived "interests" that we will protect right up to the borders of the Soviet Union. We will "defend" these U.S. interests against the desires of the local people, if necessary, and against any Soviet aid that might be given to insurgents or to rebels. <sup>It is the enormous and dispersed nature of this "sphere" that</sup> ~~That's what~~ leads us to rely on nuclear weapons, and the threat of first-use and escalation, more than the Soviets do.

The Soviets are defending a sphere of influence that in abstract terms is not that different from ours. Concretely, the difference is that their sphere is more compact, confined primarily to their zone of military occupation at the end of World War II. Thus, their sphere is virtually defined as that part of the world in which they have overwhelming conventional

superiority. It follows that to maintain their grip on it -- either against internal or external challenge -- Soviet leaders have no need to rely on threats or readiness to initiate nuclear warfare.

In this crucial respect, the two spheres are highly dissimilar. How did this come about? We were the ones who came out of World War II with unchallenged global superiority -- economically, financially, industrially, and militarily. So we inherited nearly everybody else's empire except the Russians'. That's basically what it came down to. We inherited predominant influence in major parts of British, Dutch, German, French, and Belgian empires. Along with many benefits, we took over the role of policeman and guarantor of Western capitalist interests. The resulting patchwork of "responsibilities," involvement, "commitments" and "interests" covered much of the globe outside the Soviet system, China, and our industrial allies (mostly former imperial powers.)

Our sphere is so vast we can't ~~actively~~ police many parts of it at once <sup>against active challenges</sup> -- that would be like a run on a bank. We can't afford to let a challenge anywhere appear so successful as to encourage others. Hence our concern about "dominos."

We fear to look like a loser, anywhere. We can't look weak. We can't let ourselves lose resources that we say we depend on, thousands of miles away. And there have always been powerful advocates of the position that the only way to defend those interests -- not just from the Russians but (more likely) from local people who might outnumber our troops -- is



to be willing to use nuclear weapons against opponents that threaten to stalemate our expeditionary force, or to overrun major elements of it.

In short, we still treat much of the world as if it were "our" Caribbean. That is a very unusual sphere of influence. It beckons us to enormous global risks; it has led us to rely on nuclear first-use threats to back up our police forces, and to pursue an arms race to make these threats credible.

We feel a need to show our willingness to protect -- by such radical means, when necessary -- even minor interests thousands of miles from our shores. By contrast, the Soviets have no distant "vital" interests comparable to the oil of the Middle East for us. Nor do they have far-flung involvements they feel compelled to defend to keep from being dangerously humiliated ~~or~~ (unless Cuba has become that by their investment of prestige). They let Chile be overthrown without getting involved. They let themselves be expelled from Egypt and a number of other countries. They have not committed themselves in Nicaragua. Neither in East Europe nor anywhere else do they have anything like the same military incentive our leaders do to rely on first-use threats or readiness.

There is reason to believe that the Russians see it as being in their interest to end the arms race, if it could be done on a mutual basis. They have no prospect of getting ahead of us technologically, or <sup>of being</sup> ~~to be~~ able to disarm our submarines of the ability to destroy their society. Their citizens know these things, contrary to what our public is

told. With enormous effort they have achieved essential parity. They are about to be outmatched technologically again, but they will work hard to regain parity if they have to. Still, with their economy 60% the size of ours, a race is an even greater burden on them than on us, and even our economy is straining under the weight of massive military expenditures. And because they don't rely on nuclear first-use threats to maintain their empire the way we do, they have less to gain than we do by building new weapons. They don't have the same need to enhance the credibility of threats to initiate nuclear war.

I wish that preventing nuclear war and reversing the arms race were absolutely at the top of the Soviets' priorities. As the other superpower, they could have immense influence on us if that were their absolutely overriding interest. Unfortunately, I think that since 1964 they have put even higher priority on achieving nuclear parity with us and maintaining it, presumably in hopes of being accepted by us as an equal superpower in several other dimensions.

Nevertheless, I do suspect the Soviets are more willing to see a mutual end to the nuclear arms race than our own leaders have ever been. Proposals the Soviets have made indicate that, and it's plausible, given their strategic position and the pressures on their much smaller economy.

Time and again, the Russians have actually proposed an end to the arms race. People haven't heard that; they hardly know it. (This despite President Reagan's false allegation

that the Soviets had invented the Freeze notion, and were prime movers behind the Freeze Campaign.) Strictly speaking, the Soviets' good faith has never been tested because no American President has come close to being willing to end the arms race.

No American President has wanted a nuclear war. But -- pressed by powerful domestic interests -- they have all guarded the ability to make credible nuclear threats. This has necessitated, in practice, our pursuit of an endless arms race. By keeping technologically ahead, and by pursuing state-of-the-art developments in "damage" limiting and in "counterforce" weaponry, we have sought to make our threats credible. No President to date has been willing to propose ending the arms race or to see it ended unless the Soviets make a kind of concession amounting to permanent, clearcut, unequivocal inferiority. This is something the Soviets have never shown any willingness to do ever since Khrushchev, whose proposals for a Comprehensive Test Ban between 1958 and 1963 would have assured us permanent superiority if we had accepted.

We have never tested the Soviets' stated willingness to halt the arms race. Their offers have never come close to being accepted. One could be cynical and say they're making offers only to look good, because they know we will reject them. Alva Myrdal in Sweden came to that conclusion in her book, The Game of Disarmament (although I think she's changed her mind more recently). I can't disprove that. The way to prove it one way or the other would be for an American Presi-



dent to be willing to seek to end the arms race, and then see if the Soviets were willing. This is the test that we want to see an American President make, by proposing a Freeze.



Q: What you've been telling us seems to indicate that the United States is almost solely responsible for the arms race and its continuation.

DE: That is no longer the case. It's true that for twenty years or so into the nuclear era, until as late as the mid-Sixties, the Soviet Union was far, far behind the United States both in the development and, even more, in the deployment of strategic weapons. Thus it bore much less responsibility for the arms race. But that has not been true for a good fifteen years or more.

It's not only that their "progress" toward parity has made them a full participant in the arms competition, with a full measure of responsibility for continuing it. There are also unilateral steps they could have taken -- for example, suspension of testing -- and bilateral restraints they could have pressed more vigorously -- for example, a mutual ban on flight testing of MIRVd missiles, to prevent MIRVing -- that would have been promising ways to achieve a mutual end to the arms race, if that had truly been their highest priority. I suspect that their leaders have responded to pressures from their military and their weapons labs too, just as ours have. For example, they may have given higher priority to getting multiple warheads themselves, eventually, than to preventing both sides from having them. If so, that was a bad mistake, the same as ours.

In general, they probably have given even higher priority

to achieving and maintaining parity in every sense with the United States than to getting the whole process stopped on both sides. That's my guess, even though I think it's true that they have shown much more interest in a mutual stop to the process than U.S. officials ever have.

~ Their openness to a mutual halt -- ~~if I'm right in seeing it~~ is a very hopeful aspect to the present situation. It's a necessary condition. After all, if Soviet leaders were as committed to continuing the competition as -- I'm sorry to say -- I think U.S. officials are, I wouldn't know where to look for hopeful possibilities of ending the race. There is little chance of an effective popular movement in the Soviet Union that would change the Soviet leaders' predispositions, if they needed to be changed. Fortunately, that may not be necessary. At this moment, it's the predispositions of American leaders that most need changing. It's lucky that the country whose policies are the greatest obstacle to ending the arms competition and threats of nuclear war is the country where popular pressure has the greatest chance of changing its policies. But that puts it up to us.

We don't always spend as much time as we might, in the antinuclear movement, looking critically at the contribution of the Soviet Union to the problem. There is a popular fallacy -- promoted by our government long before Reagan -- that the U.S. has been merely responding all these years to a Soviet "threat." We spend a lot of time combatting that misconception pointing out the U.S. lead and initiatives that



give it greater responsibility. I've done that here. Besides, it's U.S. policy that we can best affect, as Americans. But it is worth looking at Soviet misjudgments, omissions, and contributions to the dangers we share, if only to see all the more clearly that it really is up to us, the popular movement in the U.S. and Europe, to bring about crucial changes. We can't rely on Soviet prudence, priorities, or initiatives to be adequate to get us out of our global predicament.

The Soviet reaction in the Sixties to our threats and their crisis "defeats" seems understandable. But that doesn't mean it was wise, any more than our own policy. On the one hand, facing the threats we have made, one could say they have had every reason to build a strong deterrent force. Indeed, it is hard to say that the Soviets did not have adequate incentive to build their Bomb in the first place. Yet in retrospect, they haven't exactly improved their security by making those weapons, from the early ones to the most recent.

For example, Khrushchev probably thought he had compelling reason to test weapons dramatically in 1961, starting with a 58-megaton blast, the largest weapon yet tested (equivalent to 4,500 Hiroshima weapons). Kennedy had just made the nuclear threats over Berlin I have described, and Khrushchev knew ~~as~~ though <sup>know that</sup> the American public didn't, and

Khrushchev could guess that Kennedy wouldn't rush to tell them, lest he undermine support for the vast military buildup to which he was committed.

AA that he was facing that threat with four ICBMs in his inventory. <sup>(Over twenty years later, as I have mentioned, the actual strategic balance in 1960-61 has never been declassified.)</sup> In the fall of 1961, Khrushchev wanted all the deterrence that a brutal display of destructive power could

give him, and he wanted it fast. Yet to make this demonstration -- and to start the Soviet Union on its long missile buildup -- he was ending a moratorium on nuclear testing that had lasted three years and could have continued indefinitely.

Few Americans seem to recall that moratorium. It developed roughly like this. In 1958, Khrushchev proposed a mutual cutoff of tests; he said, "We will not test from this date forward if the U.S. will agree that they will not test." Just that. When Eisenhower refused to give such an assurance, Khrushchev then said, "All right, we're not asking for any promises. We are stopping our testing for 18 months. We will do no testing for 18 months; and we will see what the U.S. does." Whereupon Eisenhower did stop it. He too said, "We'll stop for 18 months." At the end of 18 months the U.S. said it was no longer bound by the commitment; but it didn't start testing. So Khrushchev said, "We're no longer bound either, but we won't start again so long as the West doesn't." ~~So~~ Neither the U.S. nor the Soviets tested, for three years: 1958, '59, '60. In 1960 the French tested, and the Soviets took that, rather reasonably, as a renewal by "the West," though the U.S. disclaimed any responsibility.

*P Kennedy was under strong pressure from Livermore and Los Alamos laboratories, the Pentagon and some members of Congress*  
~~led by Edward Teller and the Livermore Laboratory,~~ to renew testing, and neither side claimed to be bound by their 1958 commitment after late 1959. So the halt might not have lasted much longer anyway. Yet Kennedy had not given in to the Labs,



and he might not have.

By starting again, Khrushchev did not even save himself from having to back down on his threat to turn over control of Western access to Berlin to East Germany by the end of the year. And it freed the U.S. to move ahead immediately with tests for the enormous U.S. program of warheads for Minuteman and Polaris missiles, a buildup surpassed in scale and intensity only by the current Carter-Reagan program. Khrushchev's decision seems a disastrous error.

The same can be said for the U.S. decisions. Neither Eisenhower nor Kennedy accepted Khrushchev's proposals in 1958 through 1963 for a comprehensive test ban, even though they joined him in a moratorium for three years. After an immense worldwide protest movement against atmospheric testing induced a mutual halt to that in 1963, the U.S. insisted on continuing tests underground. (Kennedy even promised to accelerate the pace of testing, as a concession to the testing lobby -- in the Pentagon, weapons labs and Congress -- to reduce their opposition to the Partial Test Ban Treaty). So we tested and produced lots of new weapons designed by Livermore and Los Alamos Laboratories. But the price was steep: it included 1,400 ICBMs based on Soviet territory, instead of almost none.

In 1968 we were five years ahead of the Soviets in our ability to <sup>test</sup>~~put~~ multiple warheads -- MIRVs -- on our missiles. In that year or the next -- the first years, as it happened, of close nuclear parity between the two powers -- both build-ups could have been stopped and parity maintained indefinitely



by a mutual halt of the flight testing of ballistic missiles.

Flight testing of missiles was, then as now, fully and reliably verifiable by both sides with "national means of surveillance": the satellite photographic, electronic and infrared reconnaissance each side maintains. Without such testing there would have been no multiple warheads on either side. (It is these warheads that are the source of current concerns about vulnerability and instability.) Given Brezhnev's determination not to be left behind technologically or quantitatively, such a halt would have had to be negotiated before we began deploying; and probably before testing, which we started in 1968, had gone very far. But neither Johnson nor Nixon (despite urging in Congress) ever proposed such a ban. Neither wanted to find out if the Soviets might have accepted it.

Each pursued the short-run superiority that MIRVing promised. We got it, temporarily. In 1970 we began installing MIRVs and soon we had doubled the number of warheads threatening Soviet targets (increasing our numerical superiority over Soviet warheads from 2 to 1 in 1970 to almost 4 to 1 a few years later). And with a five-year lag, the Soviets tested MIRVs and then deployed them. The net result: the 1,400 Soviet land-based missiles we now face are armed with 5,000 warheads. (And they can carry many more, if the Soviets abandon the SALT-II restraints that President Reagan refuses to ratify.)

But even that doesn't convey how dangerous the situation

is becoming, or how urgent. If all that <sup>had happened over the</sup> ~~was happening today,~~ <sup>were</sup> ~~last ten years and the prospect over the next five ten~~ and over the last ten years, was the multiplication on both sides of, say, Poseidon warheads, our problems would be far less acute than they are. There would still be serious issues of waste of resources, of proliferation, of possible accidents and unauthorized action, and the moral dilemma of relying on deterrence at all. But the world would not be becoming markedly more dangerous -- as in fact, it is. Nor would our danger be increasing at the rapid pace -- and threatening irreversibility -- in the way that truly defines our current situation as a crisis. I doubt I would be spending my time as I do, in virtually full-time efforts seeking ways to brake the momentum of the current process in the very short run.

Poseidon and Trident I warheads, on submarines, are invulnerable to attack; and they are too small and inaccurate to attack land-based missiles in hardened silos. In a crisis, they do not press their possessor to use them quickly -- either lest he lose them under attack or in order to disarm his opponent. Nor do they contribute to either of these motives for preemptive firing on the part of the opponent. This is not to say that the world needs more Poseidon warheads, or as many as the thousands we now have. It is simply to say that adding such weapons does not make the world more dangerous -- less "stable" -- in these crucial ways during a crisis, when expectations of imminent war or escalation begin to rise.

All this is reversed for highly accurate, land-based



warheads that are vulnerable to attack. And that is what both sides have been buying, over nearly a decade, with large new deployments just ahead. The process started, as usual, in the U.S.; ~~and~~ as usual, that fact has been obscured, denied, and reversed in government propaganda. But that origin is less important than the fact that the Soviet Union has joined the process, generating a strong, dangerous interaction. Unless we act soon to change it, the interaction may become effectively unstoppable for a prolonged period, during which our risks will be increasing steadily.

The U.S. Mark 12A warhead with an NS-20 guidance system was the first weapon on either side to have the combination of yield and high accuracy to be a useful "silo-buster," threatening a counterforce attack on missiles in superhardened silos. The U.S. began testing it in the mid-Seventies -- just as the Soviet Union was beginning to introduce MIRVs on less accurate missiles -- and began installing it on Minuteman III missiles in 1977. In that same year, well ahead of U.S. predictions, the Soviets began testing a missile guidance system with comparable accuracy. This they began to install on their MIRVd SS-18 missile in 1981.

This Soviet development, from '77 on, is the basis for what Reagan and the Committee for Present Danger have described as the "window of vulnerability." By ignoring the <sup>U.S. deployment of the</sup> prior advanced Minuteman III and falsely claiming that the Soviets had initiated silo-threatening, first-strike capabilities, both the Carter and Reagan Administrations deliberately



made the Soviet development look more ominous, building U.S. public support for various programs including the MX as alleged "responses" to this "new" <sup>e</sup> "threat."

The new SS-18 warheads for the first time do give the Soviets some incentive to "preempt": <sup>to</sup> strike first if they thought that otherwise we might strike to disarm them. They ~~still couldn't attack our submarine missiles, which are the bulk of our force. But they could be tempted to attack what they could destroy -- our fixed, land-based missiles, especially the Minuteman III and the coming MX that threaten their own force.~~

← Earlier, or without this development, they would have had no incentive to strike first even if they were almost certain they were about to be attacked, since they had no ability to "limit damage" to themselves by destroying any major part of our own forces. For the same reason, we would then have had little reason to fear that the Soviets were about to strike, or even to escalate in an ongoing war. And without that fear, it is hard to imagine a U.S. President launching a strategic attack himself, even in the heat of a war. Without a reasonable basis for such fear, it would be hard even to make his threat credible that he might do such a thing. Since <sup>their</sup> 1977 <sup>testing</sup> and in particular <sup>simply by matching the prior U.S. "progress" in missile accuracy,</sup> since 1981, <sup>deployments</sup> the Soviets have at last supplied a basis for that fear. They deserve no congratulations for this.

We are even reinforcing the basis for our own fears in a crisis, by our expanding efforts to make all Soviet silos

vulnerable to attack, sharpening their fear of our preemption.

(The more reason they have to believe that they might shortly lose their own <sup>land-based</sup> missiles, the more pressure on them to "use" them, promptly.) There aren't currently enough Mark 12A warheads on Minuteman missiles -- nor do they have enough range -- to threaten the entire Soviet land-based missile force.

-{which carries three-quarters of <sup>all Soviet strategic</sup> their warheads}- That is the function of the MX missile -- each of which will carry ten Mark 12A's or more advanced warheads -- along with the Trident II, which will be the first sub-launched missile to have the extreme accuracy to be a counterforce, "silo-busting" weapon. The MX -- Reagan's "Peacekeeper" -- and the Trident II (now designated the D-5) are first-strike weapons, designed purely to destroy Soviet missiles in their hardened silos before those missiles have been launched.

Eventually -- sometime in the 1990s -- enough D-5 missiles are planned to threaten the entire Soviet ICBM force with no-warning attack, since the submarines can be brought in to launch at relatively short range. The Trident submarine armed with the D-5 missile -- now under development, scheduled <sup>to begin</sup> for deployment by the end of the decade -- has been called "the ultimate first-strike weapon."

Because it will be invulnerable to attack, the public has been led to believe, wrongly, that <sup>Trident II (D-5)</sup> ~~it~~ will be stabilizing, or not as destabilizing as the MX. Therefore it has had almost no opposition in Congress. Congresspersons who have voted against MX have even proclaimed their enthusiasm for Trident



II (D-5), to show that they are not "knee-jerk disarmers." They are misguided. In a hot confrontation when the Soviets had reason to believe that we might soon strike, the capability of the Trident II to disarm the Soviets if they waited too long to launch their own missile<sup>s</sup> would add to existing pressures on the Soviets to preempt. (That would especially be true precisely under the current Reagan Administration programs, which plan "only" 100 MX missiles and make an effective U.S. disarming attack partly dependent on <sup>deploying</sup> Trident II.) Although the Soviets couldn't target the Trident II itself, its existence and the threat it poses would contribute powerfully to Soviet incentives <sup>in a crisis</sup> to use their missiles -- before losing them -- to attack what they could, including Minuteman III, MX and Pershing II.

The MX will be in fixed silos, which means that it can be destroyed by the SS-18. So it is not a "retaliatory" weapon at all. It is a "first-strike only" weapon, which gives the Soviets even further reason to fear and target it. It does not contribute to deterrence of attack on the U.S. On the contrary: in a crisis it would act as a "lightning rod" to Soviet preemptive attack, lessening our deterrence and increasing the danger of all-out nuclear war.

The new Pershing II intermediate-range missile being deployed in Germany has similar "lightning rod" characteristics and consequences (as the Germans have noticed). It is even more accurate than the MX or D-5. It is the only ballistic missile in the world today with terminal guidance, homing



in to land within 30 yards of its target. Being forward-based, it has a very short flight-time, reaching Soviet targets in 6 to 12 minutes. It threatens Moscow and other major command posts with what the Pentagon calls "decapitation," the destruction of hardened command and control facilities with the aim of paralyzing Soviet response.

Since such an attack would come too quickly to plan high-level human response to radar warning, the prospect presses the Soviets strongly to delegate the capacity to respond to lower-level, widely decentralized commanders, or even to computers, automating the response to radar warning. Such an automated "launch-on-warning" system has been designed and prepared in the United States, in face of the Soviet counterforce capabilities. The pressure on the Soviets to install it would be measurably increased when the Pershing II is later joined by the MX and Trident II.

The dangers to all of delegating decision-making have been sufficiently dramatized by the mistaken shootdown of the Korean airliner by the Soviet air-defense command. An automated response system plays Russian roulette with the world. In one 18-month period, the U.S. alert warning system had 147 false alarms, four of which lasted several minutes -- or half the flight time of a Pershing II. Russian officials have stated that at some point the Soviet Union will institute an automated "launch-on-warning" system when the Pershing IIs are deployed. That announcement has the ring of a suicide note. Signed in the name of humanity.

Q: A lot of the things we read insist that if we saw a large-scale attack coming, we would sit tight and wait and absorb it first, before retaliating. ~~Could we be certain that an attack was coming in time to launch our own ICBMs?~~

DE: ~~The question is this:~~ Have we ~~always~~ had <sup>the</sup> policy that we would not launch our nuclear weapons until the opponent's weapons had actually exploded on our territory? The Pentagon has often issued statements that suggest this, <sup>Sometimes they mention</sup> mentioning that we "must" be "prepared" to absorb the attack. They say that's why our weapons "must" be survivable. <sup>(The "must" is highly misleading; major new weapons the Pentagon is demanding like the MX are not survivable in the absence of warning.)</sup> ~~That's true, since we~~ might not get adequate warning, and our weapons shouldn't ~~rely~~ on it in order to survive and thus to be able to deter.

<sup>But</sup> Sometimes they go further to state that our policy requires us to ride out the attack before retaliating. That last assertion is a flat lie. That has never been our policy. After all, our NATO policy has committed to launching our full strategic attack, "if necessary," in the face of massive non-nuclear Soviet attack, or as an escalation of tactical nuclear conflict. <sup>And</sup> If we were close enough to being sure that the Soviets were about to strike the U.S., Air Force doctrine dictates that we should immediately seek to "take the initiative." We would get our weapons off as early as possible, in order to destroy as many of their weapons as possible. Even though some Soviet weapons might have been launched by that point, it's realistic to assume that they won't all go off simultaneously. So even if radar indicates that Soviet mis-



siles are on the way, the faster we launch our missiles, the better our chance to destroy some portion of the weapons that have not yet been launched, thereby "reducing damage."

Of course, it's true that this capability offers very little promise, if any, of reducing damage to our population to any measurable degree, in an era of such large forces. Realistically, the whole notion of "damage limitation" has become a dangerous anachronism. Yet the temptation of exploiting the new super-accuracy of missiles -- and restoring the credibility of our threats -- has kept it alive in the Pentagon and the weapons labs.

Q: How long does it take to mount a launch?

DE: The Minutemen can be launched within a couple of minutes. The Poseidons can be launched <sup>equally</sup> ~~very~~ quickly, although delays in communicating with them would usually mean they would not be available that fast. But all the land-based missiles can get off very fast, <sup>Those are among</sup> ~~That's one of~~ the major arguments given to Congress for the MX and the Pershing II. <sup>and in contrast</sup> ~~Compared~~ to bombers, they can be sure of "penetrating". ~~and~~ This may be an aspect of what Helen Caldicott calls "missile envy.") They have what the Pentagon calls a "prompt hard-target kill capability."

Most of the alert planes can get off with 10 minutes' warning. In a crisis, even more of them are on alert, so nearly all of them could get off in 10 minutes or less. Airplanes can get up into the air immediately and then await



further confirmation of a full attack before they launch their weapons.

But missiles can't be called back. Once they are launched, they go all the way. That takes about 30 minutes from launch for most ICBMs. Six to twelve minutes for the Pershing II, or sub-launched missiles if they are fired close to their targets in a first strike. Installing the Pershings in Germany gives the explosives that mine all our homes a six-minute fuse.



Q: At the current levels of weapons on both sides, could there really be much temptation <sup>to</sup> of "preempt," given the amount of retaliation you would have to expect anyway?

DE: If the alternative to striking first is <sup>fighting</sup> an ordinary war, or even losing an ordinary war, or almost anything you can name -- other than being struck first by the other side -- it would not seem worth it to use strategic nuclear arms, given the certainty of devastating retaliation. But military leaders would evaluate the advantage of initiating a preemptive strike in the context of a much more desperate alternative: going first versus going second. Such a comparison does not require that you come out well, to motivate going first. It doesn't even require -- <sup>in order</sup> to choose preemption -- that you expect to come out better than catastrophically. It just requires you to believe that there are distinguishable levels of catastrophe. In the horrendous circumstances when an enemy attack may be imminent, underway or likely to begin, the catastrophe associated with going first -- destroying many of the opponent's weapons before they can be launched -- may seem preferable to the catastrophe of waiting and going second after absorbing the opponent's full, undamaged blow. There will be military men who will see that difference, both in the Pentagon and the Soviet Union. That's all it takes to motivate a preemptive strike.

The greater the difference you perceive in the outcomes of striking first and striking second, the less certain you

have to be that an enemy strike is on the way or coming soon, to motivate your own preemptive strike. So anything that works to increase that calculated difference for you has a "destabilizing" effect on both sides. (Your opponent's fear is increased that you will respond to warning or expectations of a given degree of uncertainty by preempting.)

Installing vulnerable counterforce weapons like the MX and the Pershing II on one side increases the calculated difference between striking first and second on both sides. In a crisis, the very existence of such weapons can cause a reinforcing interaction of fears. When both sides have such weapons -- as they now do -- the interaction is even stronger. But other sorts of measures can have the same consequences. A number of civil defense measures, like evacuation, and virtually all anti-ballistic missile defenses -- including the new Star Wars types -- will "work," if at all, much more effectively in connection with a first strike. ~~then they~~ Thus they increase the difference in expected outcome between striking first and second. Almost every program Reagan is pursuing has this destabilizing aspect.

Q: But Reagan says he's pursuing stability.

DE: Reagan has had that word thrown at him by arms-controllers criticizing all his new weapons, so he's just giving it back to them. If "stability" is "good," if that's what the public wants, why, that's what his products offer. He's sincere, I'm



sure, but he's got his fingers crossed behind his back. He's using the word in a very special, private sense, very different from the technical meaning it has always had in arms control discussions.

He says his new weapons -- including his new Star War proposals -- serve stability. They do in the following sense: They will make the Russians, he hopes, more likely to back down in crises, so we are less likely to be challenged. Therefore, fewer crises; the world is more "stable." But if his weapons programs have that effect at all -- and they might, to some extent -- they do so by telling the Russians and the rest of the world that if they don't back down, we shoot the works; ~~we~~ in part, for fear that if we don't, they will. It all blows, everything goes. It's out of our control.

In other words, our forces will help "stabilize" the world of conflict, precisely because they are highly unstable <sup>in the usual sense,</sup> -- <sup>the</sup> likely to explode -- if <sup>the</sup> Soviets should allow a major crisis to arise. We can only hope, then, that the Soviets have enough control over events -- including self-control and control over their allies and clients -- to keep this from happening.

It's not easy to think of a social process analogous to this "stability of instability" (as Richard Betts has called it). It's an unusual coercive process, the threat of totally annihilating the world through one's own loss of control.

The best analogy I have been able to invent is this.

Imagine that people in a movie theater see the sign "Please don't smoke" on the screen. As the sign appears, the lights go up, and the ushers <sup>(are seen)</sup> ~~start~~ pouring gasoline down the aisles. Then the sign says, "We really mean it. Do not smoke. It's very important."

This should work pretty well. [Laughter] There would surely be less smoking. You would feel relatively secure in the knowledge that you probably weren't going to be bothered by smoke during the movie. But you would also have to sit there hoping that no smoker had been in the men's room when the sign was flashed, missing the usher's little demonstration. You would have to hope that no one would compulsively light up a cigarette, by reflex, at some scary moment in the movie. If that happens, of course, everything blows. Everyone burns.

That's the kind of world we live in. American initiatives have led every step of the way in creating such a hair-trigger world, but we have been joined -- especially in the last fifteen years -- by the Soviet Union. They are producing pretty much the same kind of weapons as we are. They can now say, in effect, "You ain't the only ones anymore who may blow the world up if things get too hot. Two can play at that game." Maybe that's why they bought these weapons -- vulnerable, accurate, first-strike missiles like the latest model of their SS-18, or the SS-20 -- so they could make the same sorts of threats, of escalation or preemption in a crisis. Not a very good reason: no different, or better, than our reason



for buying the advanced Minuteman III, the MX, or the Pershing II. Whatever the motives, the latest Soviet moves are definitely part of <sup>the</sup> ~~our~~ problem, humanity's problem of surviving.

Somebody at the Livermore action showed me a sign he had made: "How does it feel to be in a plane with two rival sets of hijackers?"

I'll tell you how it feels to me.

In 1961 I had looked at plans to destroy half a billion people in a preemptive strike, and I thought to myself that this was the kind of plan that would be the end of the human species. This is how it would happen.

But at that time there really was just one superpower; ~~the U.S.~~ <sup>the U.S. had little basis for imagining that there was we were called on to preempt.</sup> It has probably been true since about 1960 -- when the Soviets ~~U.S. had little reason~~ had a massive threat against Europe, though not yet against the U.S. -- that <sup>a preemptive motive is necessary to get</sup> ~~there is only one way you can get~~ any president to push that strategic, all-out button, ~~and that is if he~~ <sup>some</sup> ~~has~~ <sup>perhaps</sup> ~~reason to believe~~ <sup>in addition to any other pressure, such as major war in Europe or the Middle East</sup> that the other side might push it first. <sup>must have</sup>

I felt easy in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis, because I felt pretty confident that the Russians wouldn't strike first. Therefore we wouldn't. Because the Russians did not have much, <sup>in strategic forces.</sup> Above all, they had no way to disarm even a large part of our strike force. Now they do.

It is not true, as most people think, that we have tested the world's ability to live with nuclear weapons on both sides -- of the kind that now exist -- <sup>over</sup> for 30 years. In just the last couple of years since 1981, we have come into a whole new era. For the first time, both sides threaten large parts of



each other's retaliatory forces with large numbers of vulnerable, highly accurate weapons, first-strike weapons. We are both wired for nuclear war on an increasingly delicate hair-trigger.

...

(INSERT HERE): Urgency/  
Description  
of short-term and long-  
range program / what to do /  
Steps toward genuine security

Q: How do people inside the weapons labs explain to themselves what they're doing? How do they justify their work?

DE: I had a dialogue recently with a high official of the Livermore Laboratories. He was the first one who agreed to my frequent requests that we meet for lunch and talk.

Toward the end of the lunch, he said to me, "The difference between us is whether you think it's more important for you to be alive or free." (You know, the "better dead or red" thing.) This man designs U.S. thermonuclear weapons. He said, "That's the difference between you and me." And I said, "No, that's not the difference."

I said to him, <sup>very soberly,</sup> "First, that's not an issue. I'm a little older than you; and I've had occasion in many periods of my life to discover there were things I would die for. I found lots of things; I was prepared to give my life in the Marines, or later, in Vietnam. And still later, when others were demonstrating their willingness to risk life or liberty to oppose what our country was doing in Vietnam, I was willing to give my life for what I believed was right. I thought it likely that I would be, not dead, but in prison for the rest of my life. Would I give my life to preserve American freedom? Yes, that is one of the things I would give my life for. And there are others -- lots of others." I said to him, "You know, you or I might give our lives this afternoon saving somebody on the street, right outside here."

"The question really is this: 'For what would I partici-



pate in killing ten to a hundred million people? For what cause would I massacre, indiscriminately?' That's the question this country is facing. That's the issue before us. The answer can't be, 'For freedom.' That's not going to preserve 'freedom,' for anyone."

I would be happy to see Congress cut off Livermore Lab's nuclear design work, on the grounds that we've got way too many warheads, whatever the Soviets do. The Livermore Action Group is trying to send this message to the scientists, with increasing success.

The first arrest at Livermore in February 1982 caught the attention of those scientists. Three or four years of other, "legal" activities had little perceptible impact, until the civil disobedience. For the first time, discussions were sparked inside the Labs on whether or not the demonstrators had a point. Of course, the majority thought not, but nonetheless, useful discussions were stimulated. As a result, a few Livermore scientists have in effect joined the Freeze movement. This has caused great controversy within Livermore. It's a very important and promising development.

Q: What kind of civil disobedience did you do?

DE: We sat in front of the gates to prevent them from entering to design nuclear weapons. 200 people willing to go to jail.

In subsequent actions, 1,000, then ultimately, 1,600 arrests were made. The head of Livermore's public relations quit his job and joined the Freeze campaign.

Q: That's how Bishop Mathiesson in Texas began his work. He wondered who those crazy kids were who were jumping over the fence.

DE: Actually, Mathiesson's "conversion" came from talking to a fellow priest who was in jail for going over the fence at the Pentex plant, where all our nuclear weapons are assembled. It was someone from the same background who got through to him.

The name of the man at Livermore is Bill Perry. He designed the whole P.R. campaign -- a very effective one. What changed him? Partly he went to hear Helen Caldicott to see what she was saying, and she in essence converted him. He also had gotten videos of my speeches to train his people ("know the enemy"), and he said that my videos got through to him as well. He not only left Livermore, but he began speaking out against the nuclear build-up, joined the California Freeze campaign, and has had a significant impact.

That's one of those dream things that you hope for: a "change of heart" by an insider.

Given what he says about Livermore, however, we can't expect to "convert" all the lab workers. You are talking to people who are getting their information from the President.



Everything in their lives disposes them to believe what the President is telling them, not what we are saying -- however factual we appear to be. Their careers depend on it.

I know from my acquaintances in the physics division at Rand that designing weapons doesn't have a whole lot of prospects of conversion to peaceful projects. You might think it did. But guys who work on these bombs have told me that there just isn't much of a market for people who have been doing what they have been doing for 20 years -- designing efficient implosion mechanisms for thermonuclear weapons. We are trying, with some hopeful prospects, to explore the conversion problem. Of course, that is much easier for workers performing less highly skilled functions. The lower talents are convertible, but the top people, on the whole, really aren't.

Nuclear scientists were held in high esteem after the Manhattan Project. They still think of themselves the way the country thought of atomic scientists in 1946. They have basically held on to that self-image, although the country doesn't laud them in the same way as before.

These are not the guys to count on mobilizing. One, two, three top-level people may come over to your ranks, and many at lower levels, all to good effect. But you are asking those top-level people to admit that they are at the heart of the problem. If what they did was wrong at all, it was fantastically wrong. So they are deeply invested in believing otherwise.

Most of them manage to believe, and they do believe with



good conscience, that they are working only on deterrent weapons. Many of their wives have been saying for 20 years that they should get out of this "devil's work." And they have responded, "You don't understand. This is very important work; I'm saving the world from nuclear war." It's very hard for them to go against what the President is telling them, which is that these weapons are for deterrence. They want to believe it. They need to believe it. So they do believe it. If we were in that same position, we might believe it too.

So you present the evidence to them. You say, "How can you say that the MX in a fixed silo is a retaliatory weapon?" I've gone through this with the head of the weapons division. "Is it going to survive to retaliate if the Russians hit us? How does that deter a Russian attack? Don't you know that the MX was scheduled for a fixed silo from the beginning?" And he said, "Well, that was in a period when the Russian accuracy wasn't as good, so the fixed silo wasn't so vulnerable."

"All right," I say, "how come it's being put in a fixed silo now?"

"They made a mistake."

Well, there are questions of inference here. In effect, I'm offering the scientist the unpleasant hypothesis that he is the one who made a mistake, in thinking he was designing a second-strike, retaliatory weapon, and that that was what the Pentagon wanted. I'm suggesting that Reagan, on the contrary, accepted the "need" for a first-strike weapon and didn't want to spend the money to make it look invulnerable by making it

mobile. In other words, I'm suggesting that from Reagan's point of view, the fixed-silo basing mode is no mistake. But it's up to the scientist to draw his own conclusions. It's a lot easier for him just to say, "I was designing a retaliatory weapon. I think they should have put it in an invulnerable basing mode. If anybody ever asks me, I'll tell them to put it in a better mode. I don't make first-strike weapons."

That's how it was with me on the first-strike plans. I ask myself now, "How could I have managed to see these things as 'deterrent' plans for so long?" It's hard to understand, 20 years later. I can give reasons, I can point to things that misled me. But still, weren't there clues that I could have followed up if I had wanted to look a little harder? The answer is, I didn't want to believe that I was working on first-strike plans.





I mentioned earlier that Gandhi, I thought, had made an invention -- a social, political invention. I emphasize that not to give him a credit in the history books, but to hold up some hope that I gleaned from seeing that his methods have not been tried over and over for thousands of years, failing to stop wars and injustice. Something new is going on, virtually in our lifetime. It has been tried only partially, on a very limited scale. Its possibilities are not to be measured by the state of the world today. It is still evolving. It is not a finished product.

~~Some people felt discouraged during our civil disobedience action~~ <sup>Colorado</sup> ~~at Rocky Flats in Boulder, in 1978.~~ <sup>P</sup> Some of you were there, sitting on the tracks stopping with your bodies the departing trains bearing radioactive wastes from the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Production Facility. *Let me tell the others about it.*

<sup>Rocky Flats makes</sup> They ~~make~~ all the triggers for nuclear weapons, which -- <sup>I've said --</sup> as you know from the other night -- are Nagasaki-type bombs. They produce the plutonium components of A-bombs.

<sup>early</sup> In <sup>A</sup> 1978 I saw the neutron bomb coming. Carter was deciding whether to go with production of it and Rocky Flats was going to produce the main components. I saw that as one of those turning points that makes the whole thing less reversible.



It's too usable. It makes too likely that small nuclear wars will happen; and the big wars will come later. I really wanted to stop that, *weapon from coming into existence.*

So we sat on the tracks to stop the train. As long as they were unwilling to run over you, you stopped the arms race just by sitting there, because the plant couldn't operate, the triggers could not be made, the bombs could not be made. In fact, stockpile weapons deteriorate because of their radio-activity and Rocky Flats renews and retools them. So long as we hindered their operations, the stockpile would actually go down at a steady rate. Marvelous. Just by sitting there, you could stop and reverse the arms race. Unless they arrested you.

Well, of course, they did arrest us. But our action helped make the people of Denver, of Colorado, aware of what Rocky Flats did. They learned about the dangers it posed for the people of the immediate area and for all life on earth. They did not know these things before. When we started, I found that nearly everyone who had heard of Rocky Flats at all thought that it generated "nuclear power," the "peaceful" kind -- not the power, as I informed them, to end life on earth.

Knowing this, they began to find ways to act. People ran for office on the platform of closing Rocky Flats. The Rocky Mountain Daily News and the Denver Post shifted their positions, saying Rocky Flats must close. People haven't yet found a way for the state to take the initiative to close the plant, since it is part of a powerful Federal institution.

Still, ways are being invented. For one thing, the governor has for the first time instituted a study of the health effects, cancer incidences, the effects on the environment, so people would begin to know what human price is being paid to operate the plant.

This all was catalyzed, in part, by our doing exactly what we were charged with in our arrest files -- "obstructing the normal operations of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons Production Facility." During the arraignment for my first trial there, the judge wanted to give me a higher bail than the local people (people without local occupations had to pay bail instead of being released on their own recognizance). I said to the judge, "But I do have an occupation here in Colorado." And he said, "Oh, what is your occupation?"

And I said, "Obstructing the normal operations of the Rocky Flats Nuclear Weapons plant. And I expect to be doing it for quite a while."

It seemed like useful work. So we kept at it. That began to irritate and puzzle the local judge. After my third arrest -- my son Robert and I had celebrated the first birthday of my baby son Michael Gabriel by getting arrested together on the tracks -- the judge had us brought up to his chambers from our cell. He had the guard remove our handcuffs; then he offered us tea, and said he wanted to understand why we were still going out on the tracks. After all, he said, we "had made our point"; we would get our day in court, with the press present. We explained that the plant was still producing



nuclear weapons; we wanted to stop that. "But you don't stop production," the judge said. "The trains always get through."

"Not without arrests." Not, any more, invisibly; not smoothly, on time, without effort or reflection on the part of the officials. Not without public question, controversy, challenge. Not, anymore, with the presumed consent of all American citizens.

A day earlier, as we were being driven to jail, handcuffed next to each other in the police van, Robert had looked out at the railroad tracks we were passing and said to me, "You know, there should have been some Germans on the tracks at Auschwitz."

Later when he came before the judge for sentencing (after fasting on water for sixteen days, nine spent in solitary confinement) Robert told the court: "There is a group of people -- someday they will be thanked, now they are jailed -- who are saying, 'Build your bombs, continue your business as usual in this death camp -- but I'm sorry that I must withdraw my consent -- you will have to do it over our bodies.' They are saying, 'No longer should nuclear <sup>weapons</sup> bombs be made in this country without Americans being arrested opposing it.'"

What these Americans were doing -- I knew from my own life, from the effect that the draft resistance of young men during the Vietnam war had had on my own conscience -- had the power to raise the question in the minds of other people: "What could I do to obstruct the normal operations of Rocky



Flats?" When enough people are led to ask themselves that question, and act on it -- ~~brought the Congress and the President, eventually, to respond~~ -- Rocky Flats would close.

So we felt we were on the right track, and we kept coming back to it. As public awareness rose and press coverage became increasingly sympathetic, the authorities began to be reluctant to arrest us. Sometimes it seemed that we could not get arrested <sup>any more</sup> just sitting there. Days would pass with no arrests. So blockaders would say, "Let's go up to the gate, and climb over if necessary."

The officials in the production facility had begun to say, "These people are very nice. They are very non-violent. We really have no complaint to make against them so long as we are not using the railroad that day. There's no problem ... unless they come up to our fence. If they did that, we would have to kill them." So these civil disobedience people said, "Well, if that's what it takes to get a reaction, let's go up to the fence and call their bluff."

I said that I thought we had a really strategic location there. We were on the tracks. The train could not pass. We really were stopping the train. I said, "We don't have to go up to the gate. We don't have to go anywhere. We just have to sit here." And that's what we did.

Meanwhile, I was very concerned that my one-year-old son Michael would start walking while I was away. He crawled a lot, but he hadn't walked yet and I really wanted to see that first step and I hated to think I might miss it. So I would

call home all the time when we weren't on the tracks and Patricia would ask what we were doing and what was happening and I would say, "We're just sitting." Then I would ask, "Has Michael walked yet?" and Patricia answered at one point, "No. Like his daddy, he's still just sitting."

But another time she asked me whether the action had evolved in any way, and I told her about the people who wanted to make things a little more dramatic, by going up to the gates and challenging them to shoot us. I told her my opinion that we were right where we should be, not threatening anybody. "That's the power of the action," I said. "All we need to do is sit."

Pat said, "You sound like Baker-Roshi" -- a friend of ours, the abbot of the San Francisco Zen Center. Zen Buddhists call meditation "sitting." I said, "That's right. 'Sitting is reality, sitting is power, sitting is all you have to do.' But I think that Gandhi's extension of Buddhism is that it does make a difference where you sit." [Laughter]





(pic)

When I actually saw the MX go off I was surprised by something I had never seen before. How many people here have actually seen a rocket firing? Two people. Well, I had seen missile launches on TV but had never seen one "live," if that's the right word. What startled me when I watched at Vandenberg was that I could see the whole vapor trail. The TV camera always focuses on the missile alone, the most interesting object. Within the TV frame, you only see the little flame behind it and a short stream of vapor. I never realized that that vapor trail goes all the way across the sky. It remains in the air for hours, long after the missile is out of sight. It eventually begins to curl, and, in the light of sunset the ionization path glows brilliantly. (A missile launch ionizes the atmosphere and creates an effect like the Northern Lights.)

It was an eerie effect, fabulously beautiful. The sky was wreathed in green and purple and violet and yellow light. This means that after a war -- this was a war missile, a first-strike missile -- the sky will be very beautiful.

# Just before this test, we were all standing around -- most of us had been arrested, some were from the support group -- at the gate outside Vandenberg Air Force Base. We were talking rather exuberantly; it had been a good day, a good action. Suddenly a CBS cameraman came back and took me aside. "We just got word that they are going to shoot this thing off in a



couple of minutes." So we turned around. And it went off, this great firework, ~~just before the Fourth of July.~~

The week earlier, while I was lobbying in Washington, I had been fretting that I was going to miss this first launch. I knew people were standing by near Vandenberg hour by hour, waiting for an indication that it was time to try to block the launch, and I really wanted to be with them. But everyone in Washington had kept telling me, "That's not going to go off this week. Are you kidding? They are not going to fire that off one week before the authorization vote." However, it was fired, and I think it was done then for one reason. That little fireworks display for ~~Fourth of July~~ was to tell the legislators when they came back from <sup>the Congress</sup> recess, "This is a reality that you cannot reverse." <sub>the holiday</sub>

Within 20 minutes of us seeing that thing lift off, it landed in Kwajalein Atoll, 4,000 miles away. It was accurate. It landed in the lagoon. The idea was to say, "This is a reality. It works. No missile that works has ever been stopped. Forget fighting it. Accept it. Go on from here. Don't fight the President on this one. He has it; it is here. It is not just a plan anymore." That was the purpose of that test.

Our purpose was to tell Congress; It's not an unquestioned, unchangeable reality. It was what my son Robert and I said to the judge, when he asked why we kept sitting on the tracks at Rocky Flats. We said, "To show that there are Americans who say that to keep this going, you have got to do

it over our bodies."

Many Americans are coming to feel the same way. The military buildup is not proceeding without resistance. As my son had said to me, "There should have been Germans on the tracks at Auschwitz. And there weren't. But there should be Americans on these tracks. And there are."

So, we wanted the Congress to know that this was not unchallenged. We were saying by our presence on the base, by getting arrested, "If you Congresspersons are willing to resist the President, you will have many Americans behind you, supporting you." That's why we were there.

The CBS reporters were doing interviews. They were posing the absolutely typical question they ask every weeping <sup>family</sup> mother after an earthquake <sup>has destroyed their home:</sup> "How do you feel about this?" Actually most of the people were weeping hysterically. I wasn't. I realized that some of them were first-timers at an action who had really believed we were going to stop the MX launch. My immediate reaction was, well, we delayed it by several hours, maybe; or else the weather had. That was all I had expected. That was my immediate feeling. But then my reaction turned into something else.

I was beginning to realize, in my gut, what we were watching. This was not a space shuttle. It wasn't even a Poseidon weapon, an inaccurate and relatively small warhead suitable only for retaliation. This was a first-strike warhead, nothing else. This is the one that <sup>could</sup> ~~with~~ do it to us.



The test missile had a red tip, which I thought maybe was red hot metal, or else red paint; but it was very, very vivid red and the missile body was white, the sky blue, the vapor trail white. I felt this was all part of the Fourth of July. Red, White and Blue. Spectacular, going up. And the vapor trail was this endless long thing. It went all the way across the sky. It filled the whole sky. That will happen, too, after the war. Not just one. There will be thousands of vapor trails for hours, on both sides. Very beautiful.

So the CBS guy asked me, "How do you feel?" Well I was feeling a little less hard-boiled by this time; but I did not want to show them. I just pointed to the vapor trail and I said: "Look at it."

The missile goes up and the vapor trail goes up straight at first. And then it tilts rather abruptly, it doesn't curve gradually. It shifts direction for the main part of its trajectory, it makes almost a ninety-degree turn to the left, heading toward Kwajalein, a big left turn in the sky.

But by the time I was pointing, minutes after it had gone off, the wind had blown the vertical part, bulging it over toward the right. It curved this part, and it looked just like this: [gesturing] an immense question mark, covering the whole sky. So I just said, "Look at it. It's a question mark."

Then I said, "And the question it asks" -- and I began to cry, I hadn't expected to -- "and the question it's asking is, 'Is this what it has all come to? Is this the end?'"

And I said, "It's asking us, 'Are the machines totally in control? Is this unstoppable -- even by Congress, even by the President, even by the people, the human species? Is there no stopping this?'"

I said, "The truth is...the machines can ask the question. They cannot answer it. Only the human species can answer it. It is up to us to answer it." And then I went off and sat down with the others and cried a lot.

So that is the challenge to us.